

GRACE JALLEH-SHARPLES
BADMINTON SCHOOL
UK

THIRD PRIZE, CLASS C
IN THE 2009 COMMONWEALTH ESSAY COMPETITION

RADIO INTERVIEW

Grace: "Excuse me?"

Lizard: "...Yes?"

Grace: "Do you have a few minutes to speak to local radio?"

Lizard: "Well...

...

...

...alright." (*sighs*)

Grace: "Not too busy?"

Lizard: "What do you think?"

Grace: "Ermm...Are you comfortable?"

Lizard: "What? On this rock?"

Grace: "well, generally."

Lizard: "Mmnn... (*Surprised, thinking about it*) yes, yes I have to say I am, quite. My tank is warm and dry. The sun shines from 8.00am sharp to when I'm put to bed at 9.30pm, when it suddenly goes dark. And cold. My sand is always cleaned. I have branches and rocks to sit on. Sometimes I get to sit on the warmest one for a few minutes, when no-one else wants it."

Grace: "How do you get on with the others?"

Lizard: "They're not a bad bunch. Not too bad. Except ... they're not very talkative. Not very sociable. Mostly keep themselves to themselves. (*Swivels one eye to the corner*) (*Whispers*) I don't trust the chameleon, though. Always changing colour. Always creeping up on you. Brrrr" (*shudders*)

Grace: "What do you eat?"

Lizard: "Well, I've never really thought to ask... oh, all right, insects, mostly. Yes (*seeing Grace's expression*), I thought so too at first. But they're not bad... you get used to them. Although, it's not what you'd call a varied diet."

Grace: "What are the others doing?"

Lizard: "Well, (*looking around*) Ethel is growing a new tail. Kenneth is shedding his skin. Diego hasn't moved for days. And the chameleon (*looking confused*) is here ...somewhere."

Grace: "What do you do during the day?"

Lizard: "Well, not a lot, now I'm getting on. I mostly start off over there in the morning (*waves a limb*) and end up over there (*waves in a different direction*). Then go back again. Then repeat the process. With breaks in between. Plenty of breaks. All in all, I suppose life is pretty good...It's just..."

Grace: What?

Lizard: "Well, it's not much of a life, is it? Here... on this rock... in this tank... just, oh I don't know, blending in. it's not what you'd call fulfilling, is it?"

Grace: "What is it you miss?"

Lizard: "Well, it's difficult to say really. I've been here since I was an egg. I used to have ambitions. I used to want to live young and free! I used to want to get on, but there's really not much point trying is there? I mean, with the glass ceiling and all (*points to the tank roof*) there's only so much you can achieve. I suppose you just grow to accept your lot, don't you?"

Grace: (doubtfully) "Yes..."

Lizard: "Still, sometimes I can't avoid the nagging feeling I've missed out somewhere. There must be more to life. I mean, not all problems are reptilian, are they? (*Doubtfully*) Erm, are they?"

Grace: "no, but..."

(*An awkward pause*)

Grace: "Did your owner use you to breed?"

Lizard: "I beg your pardon! (*Dignified*) If you mean, 'do I have children', the answer is 'yes'. I worry about them too. I don't see them any more. Too busy doing their own thing (*sighs*). Too busy for their old mum."

Grace: "How many do you have?"

Lizard: "Three hundred and seventy-eight. Just imagine the stretch-marks."

Grace: "Do you mind! I'm only twelve."

Lizard: "Sorry."

Grace: "Do you have any message for our listeners?"

Lizard: "No, not really. I've had a lot of time to think, but I can't say I've come up with anything original, any great insight into life. I suppose, I'd just like to say 'keep the flies coming!'"

Grace: "Many thanks for your time. I hope I didn't inconvenience you."

Lizard: "Not a problem. It made a change. Come back when you like. I'm here every day."