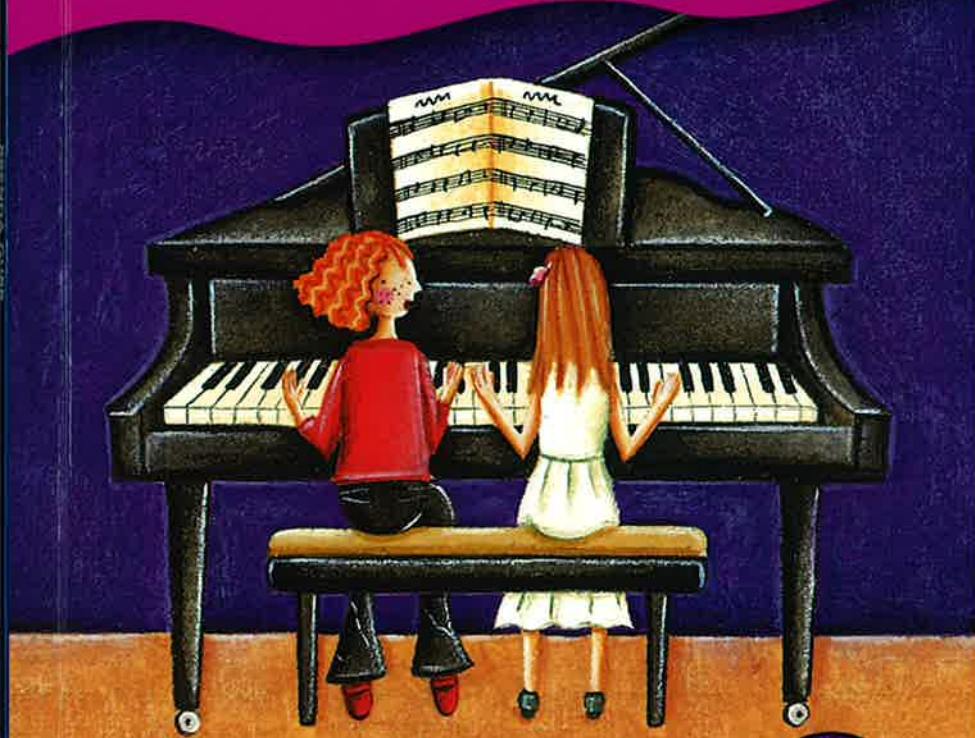
Lizard Tongue



Story by Brenda Gurr

Illustrations by Diana Platt

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Lizard Tongue

Key vocabulary

announcer, appearance, applause, bars, grand piano, musicians, offstage, pianist, recitals

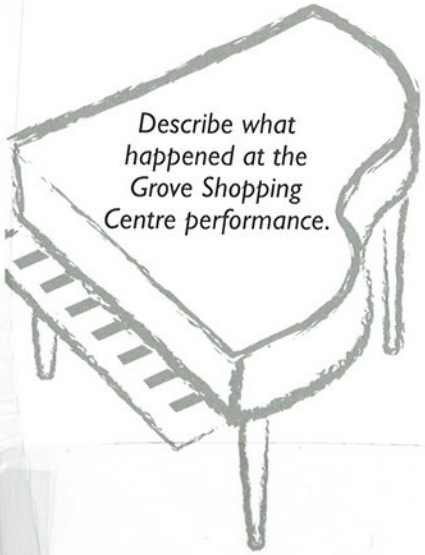
Grammatical conventions

- Adverbs: annoyingly, frilly, madly, sickly
- Verbs of past tense: called, hated, imagined, pushed, sighed, worried, wished
- Temporal and causal conjunctions: 'Then a few notes later …'
- Use of direct speech: 'Like Sasha's *really* mature.'

Spelling

- Adjectives of comparison: scary/scariest
- Contractions: aren't, she'll, wasn't, won't, you're
- Negative prefixes: unbearable, unwrapped, unprofessional

Creative thinking task – Knowledge



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CHAPTER 1

Charlie, Not Charlotte



There were two names Charlie Lincoln hated being called. One was her real name, Charlotte. It made her think of a girl with frilly socks. The other was Lizard. The only person who called her that was standing right in front of her, smelling of awful sickly perfume that drifted annoyingly up Charlie's nose.

'I can't believe they picked *you* to play in a concert hall!' said Sasha Wheatley, her clear green eyes staring straight into Charlie's. 'Aren't you worried about what people might say?'

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Charlie pushed her fringe out of her eyes and tried to stare back. 'I can't help it if my tongue sticks out when I'm concentrating,' she said. She wished Sasha would forget about the day she had spotted Charlie in the classroom, working hard, her tongue stained bright blue from an icy pole she had just eaten.

'Girls?' Their music teacher's head appeared around the corner. 'I'm ready for you now.'

'We have to do this,' said Charlie, 'so let's just try and get through it without being mean to one another.'

'Fine with me,' said Sasha. She turned a neat pirouette and swept off down the hall.



Charlie sighed and bent down to pick up her books. Sasha had been unbearable ever since the results of the Michael Chadwick competition had been announced. Whenever the famous pianist was visiting a city, he sent a panel of musicians to choose two young music students to play in a concert with him. And this time, Charlie was one of them.

She sighed again. She imagined herself walking up to a shiny grand piano. The audience would be waiting in silence. Her fingers would hit every note perfectly. When the music had finished, she would take a deep bow. The audience would startle her with its sudden applause, and…

'Charlotte! Sasha's waiting for you.'

There were only two things that spoiled Charlie's perfect daydream. One was the other winner of the competition, a blonde problem who was waiting around the corner. The other one was much worse. In fact, Charlie could hardly bear to think about it.

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CHAPTER 2

THE Scariest THING



'How did the lesson go with Sasha?'

Charlie grinned as her best friend landed next to her on the bench. 'Okay. Mrs Chang knows Sasha and I don't really like each other. But we have to practise every day until the concert. She says we just have to be *mature* about it.'

Sam made a face and tucked her legs up under her chin. 'Like Sasha's *really* mature.' She opened her lunchbox, unwrapped a sandwich and began chewing. 'You only have to play one piece of music with her, right?'

'Yeah,' said Charlie. 'And one with Mr Chadwick. That's the scariest thing.' She felt her stomach fizz. 'Apart from all the TV cameras, of course.'



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As Sasha had delighted in reminding her, cameras did close-ups. Close-ups on people's faces. And their tongues. For weeks, Charlie and Sam had been madly thinking up ways to make Charlie's tongue stay in her mouth.

'Well, we've come up with two good plans,' said Sam, her face suddenly serious. 'One of them will work for sure. And you've got tons of time to practise. The concert's still three weeks away…'

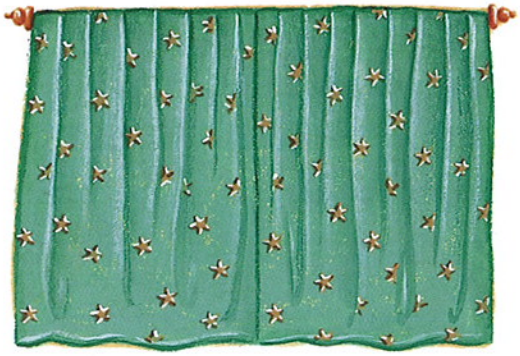
'That's just it,' said Charlie, twisting her hair around her hand. 'Mrs Chang told us at the lesson yesterday that she's arranged for us to play two recitals at Grove Shopping Centre to promote the concert. I've got to be ready for that.' She turned to Sam suddenly. 'Do you really think this is going to work?'

'Of course,' said Sam. 'The cameras might pick up something odd, but…'

'But at least I won't look like a lizard,' finished Charlie. She nodded. 'Let's put Plan A into action.'

CHAPTER 3

PLAN A



Charlie peeked through the curtain. It was almost time to go on stage.

Sasha stood next to her, smoothing her long hair. She looked like a Christmas angel in her white satin dress. Charlie looked down at her red velvet top and creased black pants. She felt more like one of the elves.

'Hey, Lizard,' drawled Sasha. 'Don't play too slowly this time. Try to keep up with me'.

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'You just need to play at the speed you're supposed to,' said Charlie. She was feeling brave today. Charlie took her hand out of her pocket. Sitting inside was an enormous ball of bubble gum.

The announcer called their names. Sasha pushed past her and walked on first. Charlie thrust the gum in her mouth and began chewing fiercely. When she reached the piano and sat down, she put her hands on the keys and tried to look as if everything was normal.

