David Walliams

Demon Dentist

Illustrated by Tony Ross

HarperCollins Children’s Books
Dedication

For my tightly folded bud...
Thank yous:

A few very impootment* thankingyous*. Firstness*, the greatportant* Tony Ross, for once again bringing my words to life with your fantmazingillicious* illustrawings*.

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* Multiple made-up word and phrase ALERTS
BEWARE.
THIS IS A
HORROR STORY.

WITH QUITE
A LOT OF
MADE-UP WORDS.
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Epilogue

More from the World of David Walliams!

Copyright
Prologue

Darkness had come to the town. Strange things were happening in the dead of night. Children would put a tooth under their pillow at bedtime, excitedly waiting for the tooth fairy to leave a coin. In the morning they would wake up to find something unspeakable under there. A dead slug. A live spider. Hundreds and hundreds of earwigs creeping and crawling beneath their pillow. Or worse. Much worse...

Someone or something had come into their bedrooms in the hours of darkness, snatched the tooth and left a blood-curdling calling card behind.
Evil was at work.
But who or what was behind it?
How could they sneak into children’s bedrooms without being seen?
And what could they possibly want with all those teeth...?
Meet the characters in this story:

Alfie, a boy with rotten teeth
Dad, Alfie’s dad

Gabz, a little girl
Miss Root, a dentist
Fang, her cat
Miss Hare, a Science teacher
Winnie, a social worker
Raj, a newsagent
PC Plank, a policeman

Texting Boy, a boy who never stops texting
Mr Grey, a headmaster
Mr Snood, a Drama teacher
Mrs Morrissey, an old lady
A Simple Case of Toothache

Alfie hated going to the dentist. As a result the boy’s teeth were almost all yellow. The ones that weren’t yellow were brown. They bore the stains of all the goodies that children love, but dentists hate. Sweets, fizzy drinks, chocolate. The teeth that were neither yellow nor brown simply weren’t there.
any more. They had fallen out. One had bitten into a toffee and stayed there. Assorted fruit-flavoured chews had claimed others. This is what young Alfie looked like when he smiled...

That’s because this twelve-year-old boy hadn’t gone to the dentist since he was very little.

Alfie’s last visit was when he was
around six. It was a simple case of toothache, but it ended in disaster. The dentist was an ancient man, Mr Erstwhile. Despite his good intentions, Mr Erstwhile should have retired many years before. The dentist looked like a tortoise, an old tortoise at that. He wore glasses so thick they made his eyes appear to be the size of tennis balls. Mr Erstwhile told Alfie the tooth in question was rotten, a filling wouldn’t save it and unfortunately he had no option but to take it out.
The dentist yanked and yanked and yanked with his huge steel forceps. But the tooth wouldn’t come. Mr Erstwhile even rested his foot up on the chair by Alfie’s head to lever himself against it to help wrench the wretched tooth out. Still it wouldn’t come.
The ancient dentist then enlisted the help of his even older dental nurse. Miss Prig was instructed to hold on to him and tug as hard as she could. Even then the tooth wouldn’t come.

Soon the hefty receptionist, Miss
Veal, was asked to step into the room to help. Miss Veal weighed more than Mr Erstwhile and Miss Prig put together. But even with all her ballast, the tooth wouldn’t come.

Just then the dentist had an idea, and ordered Miss Prig to fetch some particularly thick dental floss. He carefully tied the floss around the forceps, and then looped it around Miss Veal’s ample frame. The dentist then instructed his rotund receptionist to leap out of the window on the count of three. But even with all of Miss Veal’s immense weight yanking on the boy’s tooth, it still wouldn’t come.
With poor young Alfie still lying in terror on the dentist’s chair, Mr Erstwhile stepped into his waiting room to request reinforcements. The growing crowd of patients waiting to be seen were all called upon to assist. Young and old, fat and thin, the elderly dentist needed all the help he could get.

Nevertheless, even with a lengthy human chain and an army of yankers*, the tooth stayed well and truly put.

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*Made-up word ALERT

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By this time poor little Alfie was in great distress. The pain of having his
tooth pulled out was a hundred times worse than the toothache. However, Mr Erstwhile was determined to finish what he had started. Sweating profusely, the thirsty dentist took a large swig of mouthwash, and gripped on to the forceps as tightly as he could.
Finally, after what seemed like days, weeks, even months of yanking, Alfie heard a deafening...
The dentist had gripped so hard he had crushed the tooth. It exploded into thousands of tiny fragments inside
Alfie’s mouth.
With the ordeal finally over, Mr Erstwhile and all his helpers were lying in a tangled heap on the surgery floor.

“Well done, everyone!” he announced, as his assistant Miss Prig helped him to his feet. “Oh, that tooth
“was a stubborn little blighter!”

Just then Alfie realised something. He still had toothache.

The dentist had taken out the wrong tooth!
Believe

Alfie ran out of the dental surgery as fast as his little legs would carry him. That fateful afternoon the boy vowed that he would never ever go to the dentist’s again. To this day he never had. Appointments had come and appointments had gone. Alfie had missed every single one. Over the years there had been a sackful of reminder letters from the dentist, but Alfie had hidden them all from his dad.

Alfie’s was a family of two. Just him
and his father. The boy’s mother had died giving birth to him. He had never known her. Sometimes he felt sad, as if he missed his mother, but then he would tell himself, how could he miss someone he had never met?

To hide the appointment letters from the dentist, the boy would silently drag a stool across the kitchen floor. Alfie was short for his age. He was, in fact, the second shortest kid at his school. So he would have to balance on his tiptoes on the stool to reach the top of the larder where he would hide the letters. There must have been a hundred letters buried up there by now, and Alfie knew his father couldn’t reach them. That’s because for many years Dad had been
unwell, and had of late become confined to a wheelchair.
Before ill health forced him out of work, Dad was a coal miner. A great big bear of a man, he had loved working down the pit and providing for his beloved son. However, all those years he spent down the mine took a terrible toll on his lungs. Dad was a proud man, and didn’t let on about his illness for many years. He worked harder and harder to dig more and more coal, even taking on extra shifts to help make ends meet. Meanwhile his breathing became shallower and shallower, until one afternoon he collapsed at the coalface. When Dad finally came round at the hospital the doctors told him he could never go down a mine again. Just one
more lungful of coal dust could finish him off for good. As the years passed Dad’s breathing worsened. Getting another job became impossible, and even everyday tasks, something as simple as tying a shoelace, grew to be a struggle. Soon Dad could only get around in a wheelchair.

With no mum or brothers or sisters, Alfie had to care for his father alone. Besides having to go to school and do his homework, the boy would do all the shopping, all the cleaning, cook all the meals, and do all the washing up. Alfie never complained though. He loved his dad with all his heart.

Dad’s body may have been broken, but his spirit wasn’t. He had a great gift
for telling stories. “Listen, pup…” he would begin.

Dad would often call his son that, which Alfie loved. The image it conjured up of a big soppy dog and a little puppy snuggling up together always made the boy feel safe and warm inside.

“Listen, pup…” Dad would say. “All you have to do is close your eyes, and believe…”

From their little bungalow Dad would take his son on all sorts of thrilling adventures. They would ride on magic carpets, dive under the oceans, even drive stakes through the hearts of vampires.
It was a multicoloured world of make-believe, a million miles away from their black-and-white existence.
“Take me to the haunted house again, Daddy!” the boy would beg.

“Perhaps today, my pup, we will take a journey to the old haunted castle...!” Dad would tease.

“Please, please, please...” Alfie would say. Father and son would close their eyes and meet in their daydreams. Together they:

- Went out fishing for the day in Scotland and caught the Loch Ness Monster.
- Climbed the Himalayan Mountains and came face to face with the Abominable Snowman.
- Slew a huge fire-breathing dragon.
- Hid aboard a pirate ship and were forced to walk the plank as stowaways,
only to be saved by beautiful mermaids.

• Rubbed a magic lamp and met a genie who gave them three wishes each, although Dad gave all his wishes to his son.

• Rode on the back of Pegasus, the winged horse from Greek mythology.
• Climbed up a stalk to Giant Land and met an extremely hungry Cyclops whose perfect idea of a between-meals snack was a scrawny little twelve-year-old boy, so Dad had to save him.
• Became the first ever father and son team to successfully land on the moon
in a home-made rocket.

- Were chased across the misty moors at
night by a ferocious werewolf.

This was the world of the imagination. Anything was possible in Dad’s and Alfie’s adventures. Nothing could stop them. Nothing.

As Alfie grew older though, he found it harder and harder to see these things. As his dad spoke, the boy would open his eyes, become distracted, and begin to wish he could play computer games all night like the other kids at his new big school.

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