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Opening extract from

Demon Dentist

Written by

David Walliams

Published by

HarperCollins Children's Books

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An extract from
Demon Dentist
by David Walliams

Illustrations by
Tony Ross

The first thing you noticed about Miss Root was her teeth. She had the most dazzling white smile. Whiter than white. Like a fluorescent light. Her teeth were absolutely flawless. So flawless they couldn't possibly be real. The second thing you noticed about Miss Root was that she was impossibly tall. Her legs were so long and thin, it was like watching someone walk on stilts. She was dressed in a white laboratory coat, like the one a Science teacher wears when it's time for an experiment. Underneath the coat, her white blouse was matched by a long white flowing skirt. As she passed, Alfie looked down and

noticed a large splash of red on the toe of one of her shiny white high-heel shoes.

Is it blood? thought Alfie.

Miss Root's hair was white-blonde, and arranged in a perfectly lacquered 'do', usually only spotted on the heads of Queens or Prime Ministers. The 'do' was shaped much like a Mr Whippy ice cream, minus the flake, of course.

In a certain light she looked very old. Her features were narrow and pointy, and her skin pale as snow. However, the dentist had painstakingly painted on so much make-up that it was impossible to tell how old she really was.

50?

90?

900?

Finally Miss Root reached the front of the hall. She turned around, and smiled. The low winter sun shone through the high windows

and bounced off her teeth, causing the front few rows to cover their eyes.

"Good morning, children…!" she said brightly. The dentist spoke in a singsong manner, as if she were recounting a nursery rhyme. There was a collective groan from the kids at being spoken to as if they were toddlers.

"I said, *good morning, children…*" repeated the dentist, and she fixed them all with a powerful stare. So powerful that soon a hush descended upon the room. Then in unison all the assembled pupils said:

"Good morning."

"Let me introduce myself. I am your new dentist. My name is Miss Root, but I ask all my little patients like you to call me 'Mummy'."

Alfie and Gabz shared a look of disbelief.

"So can I hear a great big 'Hello, Mummy'? After three! One, two, three…"



Miss Root mouthed the words silently as the children joined in.

"Hello, Mummy," they murmured.

"Excellent! Now I came to this town when a very unfortunate, indeed fatal, accident befell Mr Erstwhile. The poor wretch must have fallen on to one of his own dental instruments. Oh, the irony! Of course there's no need to go into all the gory details, but suffice it to say, Mr Erstwhile was found lying on the floor of his surgery in a huge pool of blood. The dental probe was embedded deep in his heart…"

A deafening silence descended on the hall. Alfie gulped. It was a horrifying image. Mr Erstwhile may have been old and doddery, but could he really have accidentally stabbed himself in the heart?

"Mummy would like you all to give one minute's silence for Mr Erstwhile. Now close your eyes, children. All of you. No peeping!"

Alfie didn't trust Miss Root enough to close his eyes. Nor did Gabz. Both screwed up their faces and squinted. From out of the tiny slits in his eyelids, Alfie spied something very strange. Instead of standing at the front with her own eyes closed, Miss Root tiptoed around the room inspecting all the children's teeth. When she finally reached Alfie's row at the back, the boy squeezed his eyes tightly shut for fear of getting into trouble. Miss Root must have lingered looking at his rotten set, as the boy could feel



her cold breath on his face for a while before she tiptoed back to the front of the hall.

"And that's one minute!" the dentist announced. "Thank you, children, you can open your eyes…"

Alfie and Gabz looked at each other again. They were the only two kids who had witnessed Miss Root's peculiar behaviour…

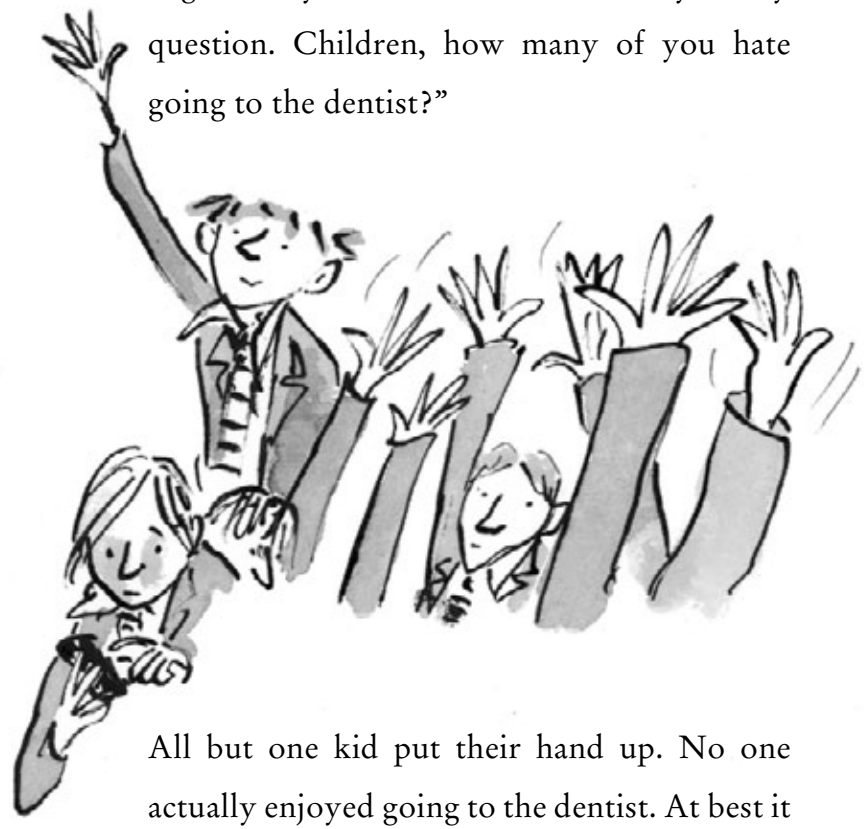
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Blacker than Black



"Of course, Mr Erstwhile will be sadly missed," concluded Miss Root. "But as your new dentist I asked your wonderful headmaster if I could come here today. Mummy wanted to give you all a chance to get to know me, so I can welcome each and every one of you personally to my surgery. Now I am going to

begin today's little talk with an incy-wincy question. Children, how many of you hate going to the dentist?"



All but one kid put their hand up. No one actually enjoyed going to the dentist. At best it was tolerated. The one boy who didn't put his hand up was too busy texting.

Alfie reached his hand in the air as high as he could.

"Oh! So many hands. Ha ha!" she laughed, though not in a way that suggested she found it funny. "So how many of you REALLY REALLY REALLY hate going to the dentist…?" incanted Miss Root in that singsong voice of hers.

Most of the hands stayed up, and Alfie actually rose out of his chair so his hand would be the highest. This boy was the king of really really really hating going to the dentist. After he had the wrong tooth pulled out, no one in the known universe hated going to the dentist more than Alfie.

"Ho ho ho!" said the dentist.

"Who on earth says 'Ho ho ho'?" whispered Alfie to Gabz.

"So lame!" replied the little girl.

"Well, Mummy is here today to tell you there is absolutely nothing to be scared of…"

The words danced in the air as she spoke. If her tone of voice was meant to sound reassuring, it didn't. It sounded the opposite of reassuring. It was in fact decidedly unreassuring*.

"Now I need a volunteer, hands up…!" said the dentist.

All those little hands that had been up were now well and truly down. To avoid any confusion, Alfie shot his hands down to his feet. Any lower and they would be underground. He wanted there to be a less than zero chance that he would be picked.



"Nobody…?" asked Miss Root.

Even the swots and show-offs kept deadly silent.

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* *Made-up word* **ALERT**

"Come on, children, I don't bite!" The dentist smiled and flashed her blindingly white teeth.

"Who hasn't been to the dentist for a very very long time…?" she purred.

The pupils started whispering to each other and looking around. Soon hundreds of pairs of eyes were glaring at Alfie. Everyone at school had at some point noticed his teeth. They were so bad, they might as well have been a tourist attraction. They could even have their own café and gift shop.



The dentist followed the children's gaze and fixed her eyes on Alfie.

"Oh yes, I thought it might be you..." Miss Root's long, thin, gnarled finger pointed straight at him. "You, boy. Come to Mummy…"

When Alfie's shaking legs finally propelled him to the front of the hall, he looked into the dentist's eyes for the first time. Miss Root's eyes were black. **Blacker than oil. Blacker than coal. Blacker than the blackest black.**

In short, they were black.

The dentist stared long and hard at the boy, before uttering…

"Don't be scared, child…"

There is nothing designed to scare a person more than being told not to be scared.

"Let Mummy have a little look at your teeth…"

Alfie kept his mouth firmly shut.

"Open wide, there's a good boy…"

Suddenly Alfie felt as if he couldn't help doing exactly what the dentist told him. He opened his mouth, and she peered inside.



"Oh…" moaned the woman in pleasure. "Your teeth are absolutely abhorrent…"

The whole of the lower school laughed at him.

"HA HA HA HA
HA HA HA HA HA
HA HA HA HA HA
HA HA HA HA HA
HA HA HA HA HA
HA HA HA HA HA
HA HA HA HA HA
HA HA HA HA HA
HA HA HA HA HA
HA HA HA HA HA
HA HA HA HA HA
HA HA HA HA HA
HA HA HA HA HA
HAHA HA HA HA
HA…!!!"

Except two children – Gabz, who looked on with sadness at the cruelty, and Texting Boy, who was still texting and had missed everything.

"Oh dear, oh dear. What is your name, child…?" enquired the dentist.

"Alfie, M-M-Miss…" the boy spluttered.

"Call me Mummy…"

There was no way he was ever going to call anyone that, least of all her.

"Alfie what…?" continued Miss Root.

"Alfie Griffith."

"Well, young Alfie Griffith, you simply must make an appointment to come and see me at my surgery very soon…"

Alfie shuddered at the thought. He had vowed never to go anywhere near another dentist as long as he lived.

"Do you like presents, child…?"

Like all kids, the boy loved presents.

"Y-y-yes…" he replied.

"Well, Mummy's got a little present for you. For being such a good boy today, here – have a free tube of my own special brand of toothpaste…"

From the trolley, Miss Root picked up a thick white tube with the word 'MUMMY'S' emblazoned in big red letters on the side.



The slogan 'Mummy loves your teeth' was inscribed in smaller black letters under that.

"And one of my special toothbrushes. Do you prefer hard or soft bristles, Alfie Griffith…?"

The boy had had the same toothbrush all his life. He had no idea whether it once had been hard or soft. Right now there was only one lonely bristle left. It was virtually bristleless*.

"I don't mind…"

"I'll give you a nice soft one, then…" announced Miss Root.

A gleaming white 'MUMMY'S' toothbrush was produced from the trolley. The bristles on the end were sharp and wiry. Alfie ran his finger along them and winced. It was like stroking a porcupine.

Holding the brush and tube in his hands, Alfie looked like a tearful child you might see at the zoo who has been made to face their

*Made-up word **ALERT**



fear of spiders by being given a huge, hairy, highly poisonous tarantula to hold.

"Alfie, we shall meet again…"

No, we won't! thought Alfie.

"Oh yes we will…" she whispered. It was as if the dentist could hear his thoughts…

To be published in Great Britain by
HarperCollins *Children's Books* 2013
HarperCollins Children's Books is a division of
HarperCollins*Publishers* Ltd
77-85 Fulham Palace Road, Hammersmith, London W6 8JB

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ISBN 978-0-00-745356-6