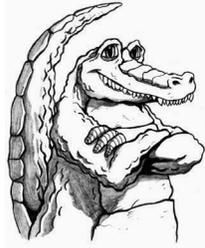


Wicked Tales

by Ed Wicke

Wicked

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For Rachel, Robert and Alice: who taught me how to tell stories.

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Note to the reader:

I've included a guide to the voices of the main characters. However, these are only *my* ideas, and there's no reason why the gorilla in your head should sound like the one in mine...

Some other books by Ed Wicke:

Wicked Tales Two: Even Wickedder Tales
Wicked Tales Three: The Witch's Library
Wicked Tales Four: Worlds of Imagination
The Game of Pirate
Billy Jones, King of the Goblins
Akayzia Adams and the Masterdragon's Secret
Akayzia Adams and the Mirrors Of Darkness
Mattie and the Highwaymen
Bullies
Nicklus
The Muselings
Screeps

Alicroc the Alien

The voices

Alicroc is cool, calm and talks like an American hippy. He's so smooth and charming that you don't even notice the 272 fine white teeth, the green skin or the spiky tail. He talks in that laid-back but upbeat way that makes you think he's completely in control of the situation, even when he hasn't the slightest idea what he's doing: which is most of the time.

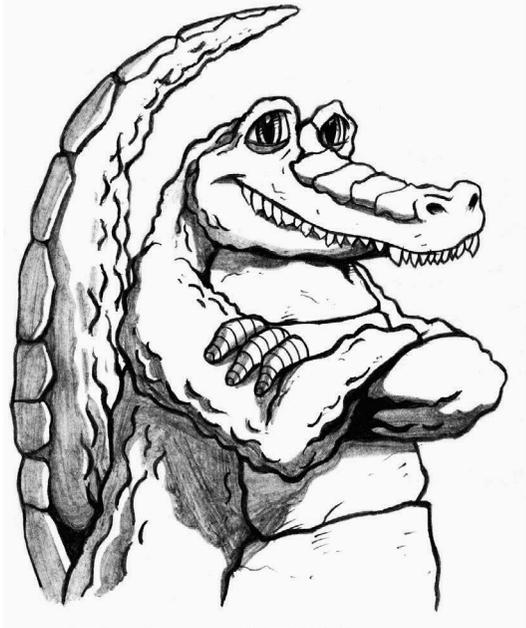
The Head Teacher is a lazy slob who got into teaching by mistake. His voice is a small-town businessman's slow drawl, and it isn't helped by the fact that his mouth is always full of fried chicken. You can be sure that he listens to country & western music, and would wear a cowboy hat if he could find one big enough for his head. He has food stains down the front of all his shirts.

The **Children** have so many voices that I couldn't possibly list them all. Some of them speak in whispers, some of them can't stop themselves from shouting everything, some of them cry whenever they hear the name "Mrs Wilson". Most of them lisp Alicroc's name as *Mithter Alley-cwoc*. Some sound like your little sister or brother, if you have one. They all sound like they would very quickly drive you mad.

The **Chickens** don't say anything. But if they did, they would sound like chickens.

The story

Once upon a time, there was an alien named Alicroc who had green, crackly skin and 272 fine white teeth. They were very sharp teeth, too: so sharp that he never bothered with a can opener. Just toss the can into the air, catch it in the mouth and – **CRRRUNCH.**



He came down to earth in his big black Alienmobile and decided to find a job. Unfortunately, the first jobs he tried went completely wrong.

For instance, he worked the till at a supermarket but kept swallowing loaves of bread at the checkout ... tins of baked beans... bottles of juice... light bulbs... and any pets that wandered past.

One day, Alicroc was driving around town in his sleek black Alienmobile when he saw a sign outside a nursery school. The sign read:

**URGENTLY NEEDED: TEACHER
FOR 4 YEAR OLDS. APPLY WITHIN.**

Alicroc didn't know what a nursery school was, or what a teacher did, but he was sure he could handle 4 year olds – whatever *they* were. So he went inside.

How to teach four year olds

The Headteacher was a big man with a tummy like a basketball. He was sitting at a desk, happily eating fried chicken: a *lot* of fried chicken, from a large, greasy bag.



'Mr Alicroc,' he said, 'I don't like you, because you're a funny colour. But I need a new teacher just like a chicken needs crispy batter. Since Mrs Wilson... uh... *left*, we've had ten replacement teachers in ten weeks. The children simply tear them to pieces.'

Alicroc exclaimed, 'Heyyyy - You mean these kids have sharp teeth? And they *like to bite*?'

'No. I mean they go on and on about how wonderful Mrs Wilson was, until they drive the poor teacher wild. It's your turn to suffer. You start tomorrow.'

'That's Galactic!' said Alicroc. 'It's Hyperspace! But tell me, Headteacher: what should I do with all these children? I mean, what's all this teaching stuff?'

The Headteacher took a big bite of chicken wing.

‘Mr Alicroc,’ he said, ‘you’ve gotta remember one thing: *children are like chickens.*’

‘I see.... You mean they’re *finger lickin’ good?*’

The Headteacher stared at Alicroc, and a chunk of crispy batter fell into his lap.

‘No, Mr Alicroc. I mean that four year olds are as *stupid* as chickens! They don’t know *ANYTHING!* So you’ve gotta explain things to them. Show them... um... Things. Tell them Things. Whatever.’

He added, ‘Now get out of my office, green boy. I’ve got some serious eatin’ to do.’

So for the next week Alicroc the Alien told the children “Things”. He didn’t know anything about the Earth so he told them about his own planet instead. For instance, he said, ‘Kids! The world is shaped like an enormous doughnut -’

‘Yes, Mister Alicroc!’

‘- with a big hole in the middle!’

‘Uh... yeth, Mithter Alley-cwoc...’

He said sternly, ‘Watch out for that hole when you go swimming. If you get sucked down it, you’ll never get out! Don’t - swim - down - that - hole!’

‘We won’t, Mister Alley-cwoc!’ they screamed.

Then he told them about the underwater donkeys that ran around on the surface of the ocean, but upside down, with their little hooves just poking up out of the water.

They believed him. And of course they repeated everything to their parents at home. And their parents sent them to bed early for making up stories....

Finger painting

The kids all loved Mr Alicroc. But they were always pestering him about Mrs Wilson. One day a little boy put his hand up and said,

'Mr Alley-cwoc, when our best ever teacher Mrs Will-son was here, before she had - ' (he whispered) '*-her accident*, she let us do Painting.'

'Yeah,' shouted another. 'We did finger painting!'

'We put our fingers in paint -'

'And we wiggled them -'

'Wiggle wiggle wiggle wiggle...'

'And made pwetty patterns -'

'Wiggle wiggle wiggle wiggle...'

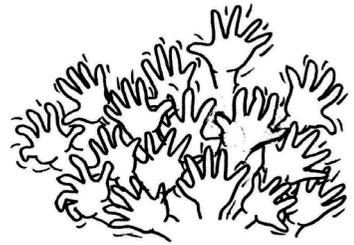
'On little bits of paper, it was fun!'

'And Mister Alley-cwoc, when you licked your fingers, they tasted disgusting...'

'Why don't *you* do fun things like Mrs Wilson?'

'Wiggle wiggle -'

'KIDS!' cried Alicroc. 'Kids, just leave it to old Alicroc. I'll do something even *better!*'



So that night he went to the shops with his Inter Galactic Credit Card and bought:

🖐 Four bathtubs

🖐 Ten enormous rolls of paper, bigger than you are

🖐 Bucketfuls of red, yellow, blue and black paint

When the children came in the next morning, there were great long strips of paper laid out on the floor and there was a bathtub in each corner of the room.

Alicroc said, 'Okay, kids! *That* bathtub is full of red

paint – *that one's* full of blue paint – *that's* full of yellow paint – and *that's* full of black paint. Now, the Amazing Mrs Wilson let you do finger painting. But *I'm* gonna let you do:

BODY PAINTING!

'Hooray!' the children shouted, squealed, screeched and screamed.

'What you do is this: You jump into a bathtub full of the colour paint you want to start with – you can keep your clothes on or take 'em off, whichever you like. And when you've got yourselves all covered in paint, you climb out and find your roll of paper: and then you make pretty patterns with your *BODY*! Squidge it all about, do handstands, cartwheels, even a bit of ballet. Then you try a different bathtub, and so on...'



The parents were *not* pleased when their children came home covered in paint. But they **WERE** pleased a few

weeks later, when Alicroc entered the paintings in a competition, and they **WON**.

However, the Headteacher wasn't pleased at all. He called Alicroc to his office and said, while gnawing on a chicken bone: 'Mr Alicroc,

you're still green and I still don't like you. And you're setting a bad example for the children.'



He shook the bone at Alicroc and said, 'You've gotta remember that *children are like chickens*. They have to be kept in their places!'

'I see... you want me to build some cages for them!'

The Headteacher dropped his chicken bone. 'No, Mr Alicroc. I mean you can't let children have so much fun at school. That's like letting a chicken do a handstand: you *know* it's gonna go wrong.'

Things went smoothly for a while, and Alicroc managed to teach the children some more Useful Facts from his own world, such as:

↓ Blue water runs downhill ('Yes, Mister Alley-cwoc')

↑ Green water runs uphill ('Okay, Mister Alley-cwoc')

●* Red water can explode at any moment! (???)

'Kids: *never* drink red water!'

'We won't, Mister Alley-cwoc!' they screamed.

'And don't drink green water unless you're standing on your head!'

Music

But one day, a little girl said:

'Mr Alley-cwoc, when our wonderful teacher Mrs Will-son was here, *before that BAD THING happened to her*, she let us do Moosic.'

'Yeah,' said another. 'We made music noises!'

'We got things to shake and -'

'Shake shake shake shake ...'

'And things to jingle -'

'Jingle jingle jingle...'

'And things to hit, it was fun!'

‘Hit hit hit -’

‘No, that was when she let us do fightings...’

‘And when you licked the moosical instruments, they tasted disgusting...’

‘Why don’t *you* do fun things like Mrs Wilson did?’

‘Hit hit hit jingle shake shake -’

‘KIDS!’ cried Alicroc. ‘Kids, old Alicroc’ll do something even *better!* Trust me!’

So that night he went to the shops with his Inter Galactic Credit Card and bought:

♫ Ten saxophones, one for each child

🕒 Ten alarm clocks

And when the children came in the next morning, he said, ‘Kids, Mrs Wilson let you play with baby stuff made out of plastic and wood and bits of string. But I’m gonna teach you how to play... *the saxophone!*’

‘Hooray! Hooray! Uh... What’s a saxophone?’

So he spent all day teaching them how to play the saxophone. And when they were getting ready to go home, he said:

‘Kids! You were great today. You were *Astronomical!* But the best way to learn the saxophone is this: You take your saxophones home with you... you set your alarm clocks for 3 o’clock in the morning... when the alarm goes off, you get up and LOCK YOUR DOORS!’

‘Then you practice the saxophone for one hour. Kids, if your parents knock on your door, ignore them. If they shout at you, *play louder.* If they get the door open, then climb out the window and play on the roof! Kids, this is MUSIC. It’s IMPORTANT!’

The parents weren't pleased with being woken up at 3 o'clock every morning by the sound of a saxophone squawking. But they *were* pleased a month later when the children were entered in a music competition, and they WON AGAIN.

Spicy spaghetti

Things were quiet for a while, and Alicroc was able to teach the children more Useful Things, such as:

'Kids! The clouds are the best hiding place ever! Do you see that long, dark cloud up there, going across the sky faster than the other clouds? If you see a cloud like that, *there's a spaceship* up there, drifting along inside it! Don't ask me how I know, kids: I just do.'

But the quiet days didn't last. One day a boy said:

'Mr Alley-cwoc, when our lovely teacher Mrs Willson was here, *before she got stuck in that terrible thing*, she let us do Cooking.'

'Yeah,' said another. 'We made... uhhh... cookies!'

'We got eggs and flour and sugar and -'

'And we mixed them together! And -'

'Mix mix mix mix mix mix...'

'And made pwetty shapes -'

'Mix mix mix mix mix mix...'

'And we cooked them, it was fun!'

'And when we ate the cookies, they were *disgusting!*'

'Why don't *you* do fun things, Mr Alley-cwoc?'

'Mix mix mix -'

'KIDS!' cried Alicroc. 'Kids, I'll do something even *better!* Just tell me what you want to cook.'

'I want to cook worms, Mr Alicroc.'

‘We’re not cooking worms,’ said Alicroc.

‘Waaahh... I *want* to cook worms!’

Alicroc warned: ‘Stop crying, or I’ll cook *you*.’

‘Oooops.’

‘Can we cook ice cream, Mr Alley-cwoc?’

He shook his head. ‘You can’t cook ice cream!’

‘My mother does. It goes all... melted.’

‘Your mother is *crazy*. Kids, I know what we’ll do: we’ll cook spicy spaghetti! We’ll make the spiciest spaghetti in the whole galaxy!’

So that night he went to the shops with his Inter Galactic Credit Card and bought:

✦ Four huge saucepans

✦ Twenty kilos of meat

✦ Five kilos of onions

✦ A dozen bulbs of garlic + a dozen chilli peppers

✦ Bucketfuls of tomatoes

✦ Every packet of spaghetti in the shop

And all morning the children chopped and cooked, and chopped some more and cooked some more, and chopped some more... and put bandages on their fingers where they’d almost chopped them off.

And then they ate and ate and ate until they were stuffed full of the wonderful, spicy spaghetti.

There was a lot left over, so they fed spaghetti to the other schoolchildren until they couldn’t eat any more.

There were *still* buckets of the stuff left, so they got their buckets from the sandpit and filled them up. They took the buckets to the old people’s home, and the old people stuffed themselves full of spaghetti.

There was *still* some left, so they walked down the

street and knocked on the windows of cars stopped at traffic lights. When the windows were rolled down, the children threw buckets of spaghetti inside, shouting, 'Have some spetti - sgetti - smanetti!'

They gave it to passers-by, to stray dogs and cats. They fed it to the pigeons until they were too fat to fly. And there was STILL some left, so Alicroc said:

'Kids, it's wrong to waste food: so take it home with you. Put it in your pockets and take it back to your mummies and daddies and brothers and sisters and guinea pigs.'

So they stuffed their pockets full of spaghetti and took it home with them.

The parents weren't pleased when their children came home covered in spaghetti and twice the size they were at breakfast. And the Headteacher wasn't pleased either. He called Alicroc to his office and said, while eating a chicken sandwich:

'Mr Alicroc, you're even greener than last month and I like you even less. You're a wasteful man, Alicroc. Look how much money you've wasted making this spaghetti! Mr Alicroc, you've gotta understand something: *feeding children is like feeding chickens!*'

Alicroc nodded. 'I *see*... You mean they ought to eat worms, right?'

'No, Mr Alicroc! I mean, if you let a chicken eat whatever it wanted to eat, what would you have?'

'You'd have a happy chicken!' exclaimed Alicroc.

'NO, Mr Alicroc. You would have a *poor* chicken farmer! You see, I KNOW about this. I keep chickens at home, and I give them only what they *need* to have!

They get Crunchy Chicken Mix once a day. They don't like it, but it's cheap and it's GOOD for them.'

The Headteacher took another bite of fried chicken and added, with his mouth full:

'And when they're a few months old - *Scrrrch!*' He drew one finger across his neck.

'*Scrrrch?*'

'Yes, Mr Alicroc. I chop off their heads and fry them and eat them.'

'Yuk! You eat their *heads?*'

'I eat the *chickens*. This is your last chance, Alicroc. Keep those kids under control, or else - *Scrrrch!*'

'You're going to chop the *children's* heads off?'

'NO, Mr Alicroc! But I'll chop your name off the list of teachers!'

Pets day

Alicroc the Alien was well-behaved for a while, until one day a boy said:

'Mr Alley-cwoc, when our old teacher Mrs Wilson was here, before she *fell into the Headteacher's chicken-plucking machine*, she let us bring our toys to school.'

'Yeah,' said another. 'We brought teddies!'

'And dollies -'

'I brought my machine gun -'

'Bang bang bang bang...'

'He - *waah* - shot my teddy, Mr Alicroc -'

'I brought my toy mouse...'

'Bang bang -'

'And if you licked the toys, they were disgusting...'

'Why don't *you* do fun things, Mr Alley-cwoc?'

‘KIDS!’ cried Alicroc. ‘I’ll do something even *better!* Mrs Wilson let you bring your toys to school, but I’m going to let you bring your PETS to school!’

‘Hooray!’

‘Yeah, bring your little fishies, your cute miceys, your doggies, your kitties and bunnies and poisonous snakeys. We’ll have PETS DAY!’

When the Headteacher learned about Pets Day, he thought it was a good idea. He even said he would bring his chickens for the children to look at.

‘But if you don’t take care of those chickens, Mr Alicroc, you know what will happen, don’t you?’

Alicroc drew a long green finger across his big green neck. ‘You mean *Scrrrch*, sir?’

‘Worse than that, Mr Alicroc. I mean *somebody else* might fall into my chicken-plucking machine...’

Pets Day arrived and so did the pets: kitties, puppies, goldfish, mice, rats, snakes, two snails and even a shire horse. *And* the Headteacher’s chickens.

The children had a wonderful morning, and so did the pets. But then it was lunchtime and all the children went to have their lunch while Alicroc looked after the animals....

Bad mistake.

Alicroc was an Alien.

And he hadn’t eaten for a whole month, so he had a big appetite.

He kept looking at all those delicious animals and licking his lips, looking at the mouth-watering kitties, the chewy puppies, tasty goldfish and crunchy little

white mice... and licking his lips again....

When the children came back into the room, they looked all around. Then they asked:

‘Mr Alicroc, where’s my pet snake?’

‘Mr Alley-cwoc, where’s my kitty-cat?’

‘Where’s my little mousey?’

‘Where’s my shire horse?!’

Alicroc looked at the children sadly and said: ‘Kids, you know what it’s like when you’re really hungry and you look at something and think: *Can I eat that? SHOULD I eat that?*’

‘Mr Alicroc, you *didn’t* eat our pets!’

‘You ate my tortoise!’

‘My goldfish!’

‘My monkey!’

‘My shire horse!’

Alicroc opened the door to the next classroom and said, ‘Kids, I *wanted* to. They looked soooo tasty! But I knew you’d be sad. I moved them next door so I wouldn’t be tempted to eat them. See – here they are!’

The children all ran inside and threw their arms around their dear pets.

‘My kitty!’ (*hug*)

‘My snails!’ (*hug*) ‘Oops...’

‘My poisonous snakey!’ (*hug*) ‘Oops...’

But one little girl looked about the room and asked:

‘Mr Alicroc, where’s the Headteacher’s chickens?’

‘Ah,’ said Alicroc. ‘You know what it’s like when you’re really hungry and you look at something and think: *Can I eat that? SHOULD I eat that?*’

'You didn't eat the Headteachers' chickens!!'

You decide: *Do you think Alicroc ate the chickens? If so, he says now: 'I had to! They were finger-lickin' good!'*

But if you think he didn't eat them, he says: 'Kids, I wanted to eat the chickens. But they looked at me so sadly that I just couldn't do it. So I opened the cage and set them free.'

Write your answer here: _____

'Oh no!'

'You'll have to run, Mr Alley-cwoc!'

'You'll be put in the chicken-plucking machine, like Mrs Wilson was!'

Just then, the Headteacher opened the classroom door and asked, 'Mr Alicroc, have you taken good care of my chickens?'

'Oh yes. I've taken care of the chickens!' said Alicroc, winking at the children.

'I hope they were good chickens today...'

'They were *very* good, Headteacher!'

The Headteacher said to the children, 'If those chickens don't come back to me with every feather in place and a happy smile on every chicken face, you children know what will happen, don't you?'

'Yes, Headteacher,' the children all chorused. They drew their little fingers across their necks. '*Scrrrch!*'

'Exactly. Bring the chickens to the office please, Mr Alicroc.'

Escape

As soon as the Headteacher left the room, Alicroc opened a window and climbed out. All the children climbed out too, and followed him to his long black

Alienmobile.

Alicroc pressed a button on his Inter Galactic wrist-watch and the top of the car opened like the jaws of an enormous black crocodile.

‘Goodbye, kids,’ he said as he climbed inside. ‘It was Hypergalactically Supercool to meet you.’

‘We’ll miss you, Mr Alley-cwoc!’

‘You were the best teacher ever!’

‘You were even better than Mrs Will-son!’

A little tear ran down Alicroc’s green, scaly cheek and he said, ‘Thanks, kids. That means a lot to me.’

‘But Mr Alicroc, what shall we tell the Headteacher about his chickens?’

He winked and said, ‘Tell him the chickens have gone to a better place. Bye now, kids.’

He pressed a button in the Alienmobile and the top closed again. He pressed another button and the whole vehicle tipped up – *NeeNeeNeeNeeNee* - until it was pointing towards the distant stars.

He opened the window and called down to them: ‘I’ll see you again, kids. Be good until I come back, okay?’

Then he closed the window and pressed a button. The Alienmobile shot up into the sky like a big black crocodile rocket.

As the children watched him go, they said:

‘He wasn’t human, was he?’

‘No, he wasn’t.’

‘He was an *Alien!*’

‘Just like Mrs Wilson...’

