

No More Dead Dogs

by
**Gordon
Korman**



Enter . . . **WALLACE WALLACE**

When my dad was a helicopter pilot in Vietnam, he once rescued eight Navy SEALs who were stranded behind enemy lines. He flew back using only his left hand, because the right one had taken a bullet. With the chopper on fire, and running on an empty tank and just gas fumes, he managed to outmaneuver a squadron of MiG fighters and make it safely home to base.

That was my favorite story when I was small. It was also a total pack of lies. The bullet "scar" on Dad's arm was really left over from a big infected pimple. And by the time I was old enough to do the math, I realized that when the war ended in Vietnam, my father was fourteen.

I was pretty clueless, like little kids can be. I thought my parents had a great relationship. The only thing they ever fought about was lying. And even then the arguments

were short: Mom wanted the truth, and Dad wouldn't recognize it if it danced up and bit him on the nose.

But even though I didn't really understand what was going on, I guess it percolated down to me somehow. The more Dad lied, the more I told the truth.

My earliest memory is of my mother complaining that the laundry had shrunk her new pants.

"Your pants didn't get smaller, Mommy," I assured her. "Your butt got bigger."

Little kids get away with that kind of stuff, so she laughed it off.

But she wasn't laughing three years later when the next-door neighbor asked my opinion of her light and fluffy cake.

I thought it over. "It tastes like vacuum cleaner fuzz. And the icing reminds me of antifreeze."

"Wally, how could you say such a thing?" my mother wailed when we got home.

"Mom," I asked, "did Dad really miss my birthday party because he had to visit a sick friend?"

It didn't matter that she didn't answer. I had already seen the hotel bill on my father's night table. The Desert Inn, Las Vegas.

I was more stuck on the truth than ever. For me, honesty wasn't just the best policy; it was the only one.

I told my soon-to-be ex-piano teacher that her fingernails reminded me of velociraptor claws. The cook at summer camp I informed that his pork chop could double as a bulletproof vest. My cousin Melinda's clarinet playing

I described as "somebody strangling a duck."

"Must you be so—you know—colorful?" my mother moaned.

"When it's the truth," I said firmly.

"But the Abernathys are so proud of their new house! Did you have to announce that it's built on a slant?"

"It *is*! I dropped my yo-yo, and it rolled all the way to the kitchen."

"Wally," she pleaded, "how can I make you understand—"

I used to wonder if things would have been different if I'd had the guts to tell my dad that he didn't have to be a war hero or an astronaut or a CIA agent. It was enough for me that he was my dad.

I almost did it once. I was so close! But before I could get my mouth open, he said, "Wally, have I ever told you about the time I led a crew that put out oil well fires?"

Oil well fires.

So I gave up, and, eventually, so did Mom. I was in fifth grade when they got their divorce. By then, I wouldn't have told a lie at gunpoint.

That's why I never once complained about the black eye I got for telling Buzz Bolitsky he had the IQ of a Ring Ding. You won't see me crying over the fact that I haven't received a birthday present from Uncle Ted for two years. The fact is, Uncle Ted's toupee really *did* look like a small animal had crawled up onto his head and died there. If he didn't want the truth, he shouldn't have said those fateful words: "Do you notice anything different about me?"

So when Mr. Fogelman had us write book reviews in

The whole truth and nothing but . . .



Nobody understands Wallace Wallace. This reluctant school football hero has been suspended from the team for writing an unfavorable book report on *Old Shep, My Pal*. But Wallace won't tell a lie—he hated every minute of the book! Why does the dog in every classic novel have to croak at the end?

After Wallace refuses to do a rewrite, his English teacher, who happens to be directing the school play *Old Shep, My Pal*, forces him to go to the rehearsals as punishment. Although Wallace doesn't change his mind, he does end up changing the play . . . into a rock-and-roll rendition, complete with Rollerblades and a moped!

“ . . . [E]veryone comes out a winner.” —Booklist

“Korman's humorous novel will endear it to readers who wonder, Why does the dog always die?”

—The Reading Teacher

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