

Squid

By Simon Meredith

(An Alex Short Adventure)

Maths had dragged on forever and lunch had featured what the school insisted on calling “cheese pasta”, but which Alex privately believed to be some kind of experimental glue. By the time the bell rang for afternoon lessons, Alex found himself wandering the corridor with a vague sense of unease and an urgent need to use the bathroom. It was Science this afternoon and Mrs Fielding was infamous for not allowing anyone to leave her lesson once the experiment had started. He’d asked once at the very start of the year; the answer being, “Do you want to spread these volatile chemicals along the corridor and into the bathroom where they might explode or catch fire?”

She’d looked at him with her beady-eyed stare, over the top of her glasses and puckered her mouth. Alex hadn’t known if she was joking or not and so had answered with a simple, “No Miss.”

He’d never asked again.

The boys’ bathroom was not a pleasant place. It smelled faintly of disinfectant and something that no amount of cleaning ever quite removed. The fluorescent lights flickered overhead, giving everything a slightly greenish tint, like the inside of a fish tank. There were rumours that the bathroom was haunted and that the ghost in question had once been a first-year now occupied the end cubicle. It was possible that the rumour was true, as the end cubicle was always locked. Alex figured that if he was a ghost trapped in the bathroom for eternity, then he’d want a bit of privacy too. Of course, it could just have been out of order for the past two years.

Alex pushed open the door.

It creaked. It always creaked, as though announcing, “You are now entering a place where normal rules may not apply.”

Inside, everything seemed a bit different. For one thing, it was quieter than usual. No dripping taps. No distant echoes. Just silence. The kind of silence that made him suddenly aware of the sound of his own breathing.

“Hello?” he said, mostly out of habit. If a voice from the end cubicle ever returned his call, he was convinced that he wouldn’t need to go in any further and certainly wouldn’t need to use the bathroom anymore, either.

No answer.

He stepped inside, the soles of his trainers squeaking faintly against the tiled floor. He walked past the row of sinks, glancing at his reflection in the mirror. His straw-blond hair stuck up at the back, as usual, like he'd been mildly electrocuted. He tried to flatten it with his hand, failed and sighed.

Then he heard it.

A wet, slithering sound.

It came from one of the cubicles.

Alex froze.

The cubicle doors were all closed except for one at the end. From inside that cubicle came the unmistakable noise of something... moving. Something soft and heavy, dragging across porcelain.

"Probably just... pipes," Alex muttered to himself, though he didn't believe it for a second. "They're old and old things make weird noises. Just like Granny Alice."

But he also knew that pipes did not slither. There again, neither did ghosts. They tended to float with grace even when coming straight at you. And he ought to know, having met a ghost once. Not that anyone believed him.

He took a cautious step forward.

The air felt damp. Not just humid, but damp, like the room itself had been dunked underwater and then only half-dried. The smell changed too, shifting from disinfectant to something saltier. Like the seaside.

Which was impossible, because the nearest beach was miles away.

Another sound came from the cubicle.

This time, it was a suction noise.

Alex's stomach flipped.

"Okay," he whispered, "that is definitely not pipes."

He considered leaving. In fact, leaving seemed like an excellent idea. A brilliant idea. Possibly the best idea he had ever had.

But then something else happened.

A thin trickle of water slid out from beneath the cubicle door.

It crept across the tiles, slow and deliberate, like it knew exactly where it was going. It reached Alex's shoe and soaked into the fabric.

The water was cold.

Alex looked down at his foot, then back at the cubicle.

“Right,” he said, as if addressing an invisible audience. “That’s new.”

Before he could reconsider, he stepped closer and pushed the cubicle door open.

Please, don't be a ghost, his mind repeated over and over again. Please, don't be a ghost. Please, don't be a ghost.

At first, his brain refused to understand what it was seeing. The toilet was gone. Or rather, it was still there, but it was no longer the most important thing in the cubicle.

Because rising up from the bowl, like some terrible, impossible fountain, was a massive, glistening tentacle.

It was thick; thicker than Alex's arm, and covered in rows of pale, puckered suckers that flexed and contracted with a life of their own. Its surface shimmered with a slick, oily sheen, shifting colours between deep purple and sickly grey.

And it was moving.

Alex stared.

The tentacle paused, as though it had noticed him.

For a brief, absurd moment, Alex wondered if he should say hello. Try to be friendly. He'd never met a tentacle before.

Then the tentacle lunged.

Alex yelped and stumbled backward, slipping on the wet tiles. He crashed into the sinks, sending a plastic soap dispenser clattering to the floor.

“Nope!” he shouted, scrambling to his feet.

The tentacle lashed out again, striking the cubicle door and splintering it. Wood cracked. Hinges snapped. The door flew off and skidded across the floor.

And then more tentacles emerged.

Not one. Not two. Dozens.

They poured out of the toilet like some nightmarish spaghetti, writhing and coiling over one another, spreading across the floor, up the walls, even along the ceiling. The bathroom seemed to shrink as they filled the space.

At their centre, something larger began to rise.

A bulbous, glistening head forced its way up through the shattered remains of the toilet bowl, as though the plumbing system of the entire school were being violently stretched. It was followed by two enormous eyes opened, glossy and black, reflecting the flickering lights.

The giant squid regarded Alex.

Alex regarded the giant squid.

“Umm,” Alex said faintly, “Hello.”

The squid made a sound, low and gurgling, like water being forced through a drain.

Then it attacked.

Tentacles shot toward Alex from every direction. He ducked one, tripped over another, and barely avoided being wrapped up like a human burrito. One tentacle snagged his sleeve, yanking him sideways. He twisted free, leaving behind a damp, slimy streak on his jumper.

“Let go of me!” he yelled, as though the squid might respond to polite requests.

It did not.

Another tentacle whipped past his face, close enough that he felt the suction cups brush his cheek. They were cold and rubbery, leaving behind faint circular marks.

Alex grabbed the nearest thing he could find: a plunger.

He held it out in front of him like a sword.

“Stay back!” he declared, trying to sound brave and only succeeding in sounding slightly squeaky.

The squid did not stay back.

A tentacle lunged. Alex reacted on instinct, jamming the plunger forward. By sheer luck, the rubber cup stuck firmly to one of the tentacle’s suckers with a loud, comedic *plop*.

Everything paused.

Alex blinked.

The tentacle seemed... confused. It shook itself gently, trying to dislodge the plunger, but it stayed firmly where it was. The tentacle hovered where it was, swaying from side to side. But at least it was no longer lashing out at him.

“Well,” Alex said, equally confused, “that worked better than expected.”

He yanked the plunger back. It resisted for a moment, then came free with a wet *schlurp*, sending droplets of seawater splattering across the room and all over him.

He was now officially soaking wet.

“Great,” he muttered. “Mum’s going to love this.”

The squid, now free of the offending plunger, lashed out more aggressively. Multiple tentacles wrapped around Alex’s legs, pulling him off his feet. He hit the floor hard, the impact knocking the breath out of him.

The tiles were now completely flooded. Water sloshed around him as he struggled.

“Okay,” he gasped, “new plan... new plan...”

He looked around wildly.

The sinks.

The taps were still running, though he couldn’t remember turning them on. Water poured into the already flooded room, as if helping the squid feel more at home.

“Of course,” Alex said. “Why wouldn’t the bathroom be helping the giant sea monster?”

Another tentacle wrapped around his ankle, tightening.

Alex swung the plunger again, smacking it against the tentacle. It didn’t do much damage, but it startled the creature enough for him to wriggle free.

He scrambled toward the sinks, slipping and sliding, his clothes clinging to him.

Think, Alex. Think. What would Leslie do? That was easy, she’d probably just punch it and then tell it off, as it slunk back to wherever it had come from. But that wasn’t him, he knew. He needed another tactic.

What did he know about squids?

Not much.

They lived in the ocean. They had tentacles. They were not supposed to be in school bathrooms.

“Not,” he said aloud, “helpful.”

One of the tentacles slammed into the sinks, cracking the porcelain. Water sprayed everywhere, adding to the chaos. The mirror shattered, fragments falling into the rising pool.

Alex grabbed a loose piece of tile from the broken sink area. It was heavy, but manageable.

“Okay,” he said, more to himself than anyone else, “let’s try this.”

As another tentacle lunged, he held the tile with all his strength, a makeshift shield against the onslaught. It connected with a wet thud.

The squid recoiled slightly.

“Ha!” Alex shouted, encouraged.

He swung the tile, hitting the creature’s tentacle with what was probably the same force as an ant striking an elephant. Then he did it again and again. Each hit wasn’t particularly powerful, but they seemed to annoy the creature.

The squid let out another gurgling noise, louder this time.

Its eyes narrowed.

And then it did something unexpected.

It retreated.

The tentacles began to withdraw, slowly at first, then faster, sliding back toward the ruined toilet. The water level started to drop as well, as though being sucked away along with the creature.

“No way,” Alex said, watching in disbelief. “That’s it?”

Within seconds, the bathroom was almost empty again, except for the destruction.

The squid gave Alex one last look, its enormous eye lingering on him.

Then it vanished, disappearing back down into the depths of the plumbing with a final, echoing *glorp*.

Silence returned.

Alex stood there for a moment, breathing heavily.

The floor was still wet. The sinks were broken. The mirror was shattered. The cubicle was basically gone and he was completely, utterly soaked. His hair dripped. His clothes clung to him. His shoes squelched when he moved.

“Well,” he said to no one, “that was... something.”

Water dripped from his sleeves as he looked around the ruined bathroom. No one would ever believe him. He already knew that.

He trudged toward the door, leaving wet footprints behind him.

As he reached for the handle, he paused. For just a moment, he thought he heard something. A faint, distant slithering. From the pipes. Alex stared at the door.

“Right,” he said firmly. “Chemistry.”

And with that, he stepped out into the corridor, soaking wet, slightly slimy, and absolutely certain that Mrs Fielding was never going to believe him.

© 2026 Simon Meredith

All rights reserved.

No part of this book may be reproduced, or stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording, or otherwise, without express written permission of the publisher.