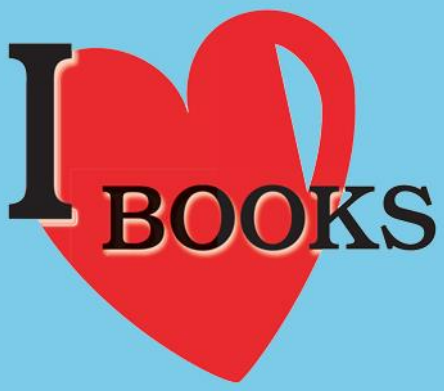


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Opening extract from

The Long Lost Secret Diary of the World's Worst Pirate

Written by

Tim Collins

Illustrated by

Sarah Horne

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Chapter I

Life at Sea





Wednesday March 1st

Avast Ye! I spy a bunch of scurvy dogs on the horizon. Raise the Jolly Roger and shiver me timbers!

Oh, who am I kidding? I'm not a pirate. I'm just a passenger on an ordinary merchant ship. And we're on our way to the port of Kingstown on the Caribbean island of Saint Finbarr, not sailing around in search of treasure. My life couldn't feel less like an adventure right now. But I did just climb up to the top of the

mainmast. Sort of. I got a couple of feet up the ropes before Dad spotted me and ordered me to come down. He's been like that ever since we set sail from England two weeks ago.

Because we're such important passengers, we're allowed to sleep in the captain's quarters at the back of the upper deck. Everyone else has to sleep in the crew's quarters on the lower deck.

I'm glad I don't have to sleep near all the stinky sailors, but I'm really bored of this tiny space. I wish Mum and Dad would let me out to look at the sea. I'm so sick of spending all day in my hammock listening to the wood of the ship creak.

Dad says the deck is too dangerous and I'll fall overboard and get eaten by sharks. He probably also thinks I'll throw up on everyone. Which I admit I did quite a lot when we first

boarded. But I'd never been at sea before and the constant swaying and dizziness took a lot of getting used to.

But that's all over now. I've got my sea legs. The chances of me ruining another barrel of biscuits by spewing in them are very low.

I'm back in my hammock now, dreaming of being a fearsome sea rover rather than a pampered passenger.

Shiver me timbers and heave to and pieces of eight and whatever else it is pirates say.



Thursday March 2nd

I sneaked into the galley today and got our chef Noah to tell me pirate stories. I've never been at sea before, but everyone else has been sailing for years, and they've had loads of brilliant adventures.

Today Noah explained pirate punishments to me. He's told me before, but I enjoyed it so much I got him to go through it again.

As well as attacking other seafarers, pirates often fall out with each other, and the treatment they dish out is severe. Sometimes they maroon their victims on desert islands with just a pistol so they can shoot themselves with it if it all gets too boring. Other times they whip their victims with a cat o'nine tails, ripping open their flesh. And if they're really angry they 'keelhaul' them, which means they tie their victims with ropes and drag them across the rough underside of a ship. Ouch.

My least favourite of these would be keelhauling, followed by the cat o'nine tails, followed by marooning. That last one doesn't actually sound that bad. You could build yourself a shelter and spend your days fishing



and swimming. That's got to be better than having your skin torn apart on the barnacles underneath a ship.

I have to put on a stern face when the others tell me stuff like this. I know it wouldn't be fun to be tortured, but the life of a pirate still sounds very exciting. Sometimes I think leading a boring, protected life is the worst punishment of all.

I'd love to go hunting for buried treasure. I thought that was what my life at sea would be like. I didn't think I'd be stuck here in my swaying hammock, writing my diary and dreaming of something more exciting.



GET REAL

Marooning, keelhauling and the cat o' nine tails were all genuine pirate punishments. The cat o' nine tails was a whip with nine knotted strands that could tear through flesh. It was made from a thick rope unravelled at one end. As well as giving agonising cuts, it could spread diseases if the blood from the last victim hadn't been cleaned off properly.

Friday March 3rd

Mum and Dad came into the captain's quarters to examine a map this afternoon. They were so distracted I managed to sneak onto the upper deck and roam around. The sea was calm, which meant I could stroll about without any danger of falling overboard.

The ship didn't seem like such a bad place as I wandered under the blazing sun and stared out at the endless blue ocean. I could only imagine

all the pirates out there having brilliant adventures without me.

I stood behind one of the cannons on the starboard side and pretended I was a pirate firing on a passing vessel. I got so carried away that for a moment I thought I could really see another ship on the horizon, but I think I was just imagining it.

A breeze soon picked up and everyone began to stir. One of our crew members called Will shouted for help setting the topsail, which meant he wanted someone to climb up to the mainmast and unfurl a sail.

I offered straight away. Will didn't look too keen, but before he could say anything I was dragging myself up the ropes.

The wind blew stronger as I went up and

the mast swayed back and forth. The ropes stretched and swung, making them really hard to climb. At times they shook so violently I had to grip them until my knuckles went white.

Finally, I reached the top and crept onto one of the horizontal wooden poles. I looked over at Will to see how he was untying his end of the sail. Then I made a big mistake. I glanced down.

The deck was much further away than I was expecting. The crew were gathered around below. Two figures darted out of the captain's quarters.

Uh-oh. Mum and Dad.

I could see Dad's red face as I clung to the pole. I wanted to untie the sail and move calmly back down the ropes to prove him wrong for

confining me to the captain's quarters. But I couldn't take my eyes off the deck.

The ship lurched wildly from side to side. I had this weird feeling that I was staying perfectly still and it was the ship and the entire sea that were swaying. Then I felt my grip loosening. I told my arms to hold on. But the motion of the ship made me queasy and my muscles were weak.

Wind whistled past me as I plunged down.

The next thing I knew I was in Noah's arms. I could see Mum in front of me. Her face had gone pale. Somewhere behind me Dad was ranting about how I could have been killed and this was exactly why I shouldn't have been allowed on deck.

Just my luck. I make one tiny mistake and now he's going to go on about it forever.

Saturday March 4th

Okay, so my attempt to climb up to the sails didn't go brilliantly. But I've apologised now and we should all move on.

No chance of that. Dad's still so angry he's forbidden everyone from speaking to me. Not only do I have to stay here in my hammock, but even if someone else came in, I couldn't get them to tell me pirate stories.

So I've just been lying here scribbling in my diary with my pencil and looking back over the other entries. One thing that's been preying on my mind is the ship I thought I saw when I was behind the cannon. The more I think about it, the more convinced I am that it was real.

I feel like I should warn the others, but how can I? I'm not allowed to speak to anyone.