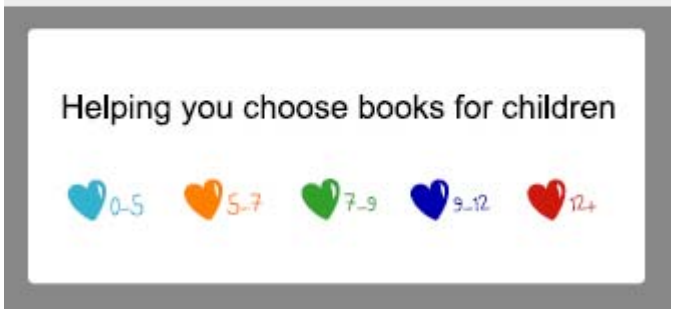
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opening extract from

Charlie Small: Gorilla City

written by

Charlie Small

published by

David Fickling Books

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PUBLISHER'S NOTE

Charlie Small's journal was found washed up on the banks of the river Wyre, at Skippool in Lancashire, England. No one is sure where it came from or how old it may be. The address listed inside no longer exists, so if you have any information as to the whereabouts of Charlie Small, please contact the publishers.

Name: Charlie Small

Address: ~~11 12, Merlin Place, West Street~~
Gorilla City, the jungle, somewhere

Age: ~~Eight~~ 4000 (Maybe even more!)

Mobile: 07717 432



School: St Beckham's

Things I like: Exploring; climbing trees; collecting rocks and animal skulls; playing computer games; mountain biking; skateboarding; watching TV.

My Adventures Begin

Such a lot has happened since lunchtime! It's now midnight and I'm camped in the middle of a vast and windswept plain, many miles from home. I'd been looking for adventure – and I've found it. More adventure than I could have possibly imagined!

It all started this afternoon. There was a huge storm last night and it was still raining really hard when I woke up, so I'd stayed indoors playing computer games. I'd finally beaten the big boss on level six when Mum came into my room.

'I can't believe you're still playing that stupid game, Charlie,' she sighed. 'It stopped raining ages ago. Why don't you go to the park? I'm sure some of your friends will be there.'

'I don't want to go to the park,' I said, pulling a face and striking the console with a rapid rat-a-tat-tat.

'You need some fresh air,' Mum insisted.

'But if I can just finish this next level, I'll beat my best score,' I protested.

Just then – and I have no idea what caused it – the computer crackled and a tiny spark of electricity ran a ragged path right across the picture. The game froze and the screen faded to black.

'No way!' I moaned. 'What was that?'

I tried rebooting the computer, but the game wouldn't restart. 'Oh, brilliant,' I scowled. 'It's broken! What am I supposed to do now?'

'Well,' said Mum, 'seeing as the computer is off and you don't want to go to the park, how about making yourself useful by tidying your room?'

I looked around at the huge piles of stuff on my floor and gulped. Suddenly going outside didn't seem like such a bad idea.

'Can't I go exploring, Mum?' I asked. 'If I promise to tidy my room later.'

Mum pursed her lips.

'I could try out that raft Dad helped me build . . .'

She put her hands on her hips.

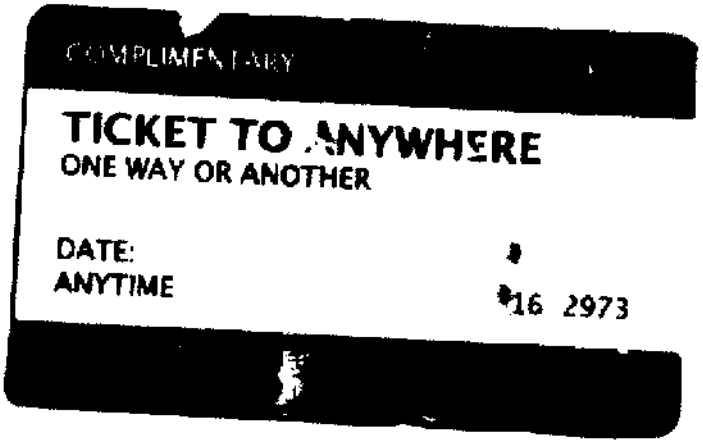
'And you *did* say I needed some fresh air,' I pointed out.

'Oh, all right,' said Mum, heading downstairs with a sigh. 'Just don't be late for tea.'

Brilliant! I rummaged under my bed for my rucksack. I always took it out with me if I was going exploring, and kept it packed full of things that might come in handy. Dragging it out, I checked to make sure they were all there:



1) My penknife (Mum would kill me if she knew about this!)
2) A ball of string
3) A water bottle (full)
4) A big bag of Paterchak's mint humbugs (the stripy kind)
5) A telescope
6) My pyjamas (in case I ever have to camp out overnight!)
7) A scarf
8) An old railway ticket
9) This old notebook (to write up my adventures in)
10) My mobile phone and wind-up charger
11) A pack of wild animal collector's cards. They are full of very scary facts, and could be useful to an explorer



12) A glue pen (to stick any interesting finds in my book)

I swung the rucksack onto my back, threw my leg over the banister and slid down into the hall.

I'd just grabbed my coat and was running for the door when my nose caught the smell of freshly baked cakes wafting from the kitchen. I couldn't resist sneaking back to steal one off the tray.

'See you later, Mum,' I yelled, dodging past her and racing for the back door.

But if I'd known then what I know now, I would have grabbed the whole tray of cakes. Because something tells me I won't be tasting

Mum's delicious cooking again for a very long time.

But hold on! I'm getting ahead of myself! If this is to be a proper explorer's diary, I need to tell things in the right order. And that means I can't write about the rhino yet. (I want this to surprise you as much as it surprised me!) I need to explain how I got here, and why I don't think I'll be tasting any more of Mum's cakes any time soon . . .

I ran down the path to the bottom of our garden, pushed past the weeds at the side of the shed and stepped up onto the bank of the stream. I untied my raft, used the wooden oar to push my way through the reeds that grew thick from the bank, and began to paddle downstream. There was no one else around, but I didn't mind. I'd decided to see if I could make it all the way to the main river.

Up A Creek!

I soon realized that finding my way wasn't going to be easy. The stream was so full of rain from the thunderstorm that it had burst its banks. Muddy water was swirling through the

reeds and tree roots at the bottom of next door's garden, and the waste-ground on the far bank was all flooded.

My little raft was soon bouncing about in the swirls and eddies, and twice I had to lean hard on my paddle so I wouldn't be tipped overboard. I was concentrating so hard I didn't notice that storm clouds were gathering in the sky once again.

It was then that things really started to happen . . .

There was a sudden rumble of thunder and the heavens opened. The rain came pouring down and I was soaked in seconds. The stream began churning with froth, and before I could paddle for the bank my raft was swept along in a surge of flood water!

It was pointless trying to paddle, so I raised the oar out of the water and *WHAM!* a huge bolt of lightning shot from the clouds. It flashed down onto the end of my upraised paddle and sent a judder dancing right through my body. Whoa! My limbs kicked and tingled with energy and then I was slammed down onto the raft as the fork of brilliant light passed right through me, fizzing and cracking along

the stream until it disappeared from view.

I lay still for a moment as the raft spun in crazy circles, then I sat up very carefully, heart racing, and quickly inspected myself for damage. Amazingly I seemed to be completely unharmed!

I was just struggling to my feet when I heard a thick buzzing noise like a muffled chainsaw. I turned my head and *WHOOSH!* a huge dragonfly, much bigger than any I'd ever seen before, swooped past my nose and flew off across the reeds. I was so surprised I almost toppled into the water!

