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opening extract from

Charlie Small: Pirate Galleon

written by

Charlie Small

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If you find this book, PLEASE look after it. This is the only true account of my remarkable adventures.

My name is Charlie Small and I am four hundred years old, maybe even more. But in all those long years, I have never grown up. Something happened when I was eight years old, something I can't begin to understand. I went on a journey... and I'm still trying to find my way home. Now, although I have organised jailbreaks, can spit a hundred metres and know more seafaring curses than a sailor's parrot, I still look like any eight-year-old boy you might pass in the street.

I've travelled to the ends of the earth and to the centre of the earth. I've fought bloody battles, climbed the rigging of worm-rotted galleons and seen creatures you don't even know exist! You may think this sounds fantastic, you could think it's a lie. But you would be wrong, because EVERYTHING IN THIS BOOK IS TRUE.

Believe this single fact and you can share the most incredible journey ever experienced!

Charlie Small.

Caught Red-Handed

I've finally escaped from the jungle, but I'm not *any* closer to finding my way home. In fact I'm in more danger than ever! If only I hadn't fallen asleep in that cabin . . .

I awoke with a start when the door to the building *CRASHED* open and a band of robber pirates charged into the room! As they edged towards me, cutlasses at the ready, I could see that they were a gang of the most gruesome, ghastly and grisly bandits you could ever meet . . . and, worst of all, they were *female* pirates! Was this going to be the end of my amazing journey?

The gang of lady pirates gathered around me. I was sitting at their dinner table, still groggy from having fallen into an exhausted sleep after pigging out on their food. Horrible



smiles split the pirates' faces, exposing rows of rotting teeth. I had been caught red-handed, and the pirates were as pleased as punch!

'Well, what do we have here?' sneered the captain, her gold bracelets jangling as she lifted her cutlass to my throat.

'Uh, eh, oh!' I grunted in reply. I don't know whether it was from sheer terror at having the point of a huge bloodstained cutlass pressed against my neck, or because I had spent so long among the jungle gorillas, but I was finding it difficult to speak. One wrong move and I would be sliced open like a ripe peach.

You can read about that in my other Journal Gorilla City.

'I said, *What do we have here?*' repeated the captain, giving a jab with her cutlass. 'Is it a little sand worm? A hermit crab? A skinny starfish? Well, speak up – what are you?'

Of course, they knew perfectly well what I was. They were just teasing me, making me sweat! I told them I was a boy called Charlie Small.

'A boy?' The captain scoffed. 'A sneak thief, more like! Well, we don't like boys.'

'We don't like boys,' repeated the others, grinning. 'And we don't like sneak thieves.'

'Don't like sneak thieves?' I cried, thinking of all the jewels and gold I'd seen in the next room. 'That's rich! There's a room full of stolen stuff behind that door!'

'So, you saw our special things, did you?' said the captain, with an even harder edge to her voice. 'Well, well, well. That is a shame for you, because now we can never let you go. What shall we do with him, girls?'

'Slice him!' they roared. 'Skewer him! Skin him alive!'

'Dice him, sauté him in rum and cook him over a low heat!'

'He would make a tasty starter—'

'No!' I yelled. I had to put a stop to this, before I ended up bubbling in a pot. 'I'm, er . . . tougher than you think. I would be much too chewy to eat, even stewed. If you let me live, I could be useful.'

'Useful? Useful how?'

'Well, I can cook a bit, and I could clean this place up – I could be your cabin boy!'

The captain gave me a long look.

'Lock him in the strongroom, girls,' she said. 'I've got some thinking to do.'

In The Lockup

I was thrown into the treasure room and the door slammed behind me. I could hear the bolts and padlocks clunking shut, and I knew there would be little chance of escape.

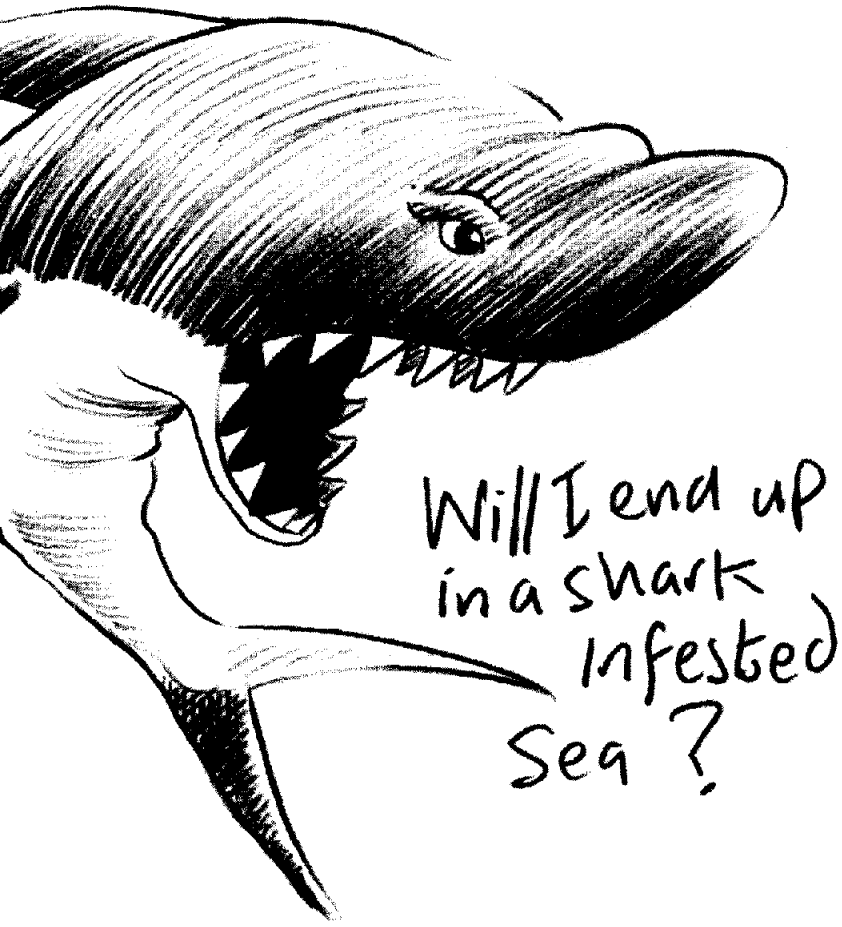
It was very gloomy inside; there were no windows in the room and the only light came from the small grille set in the door. I had no option but to wait and see what happened.

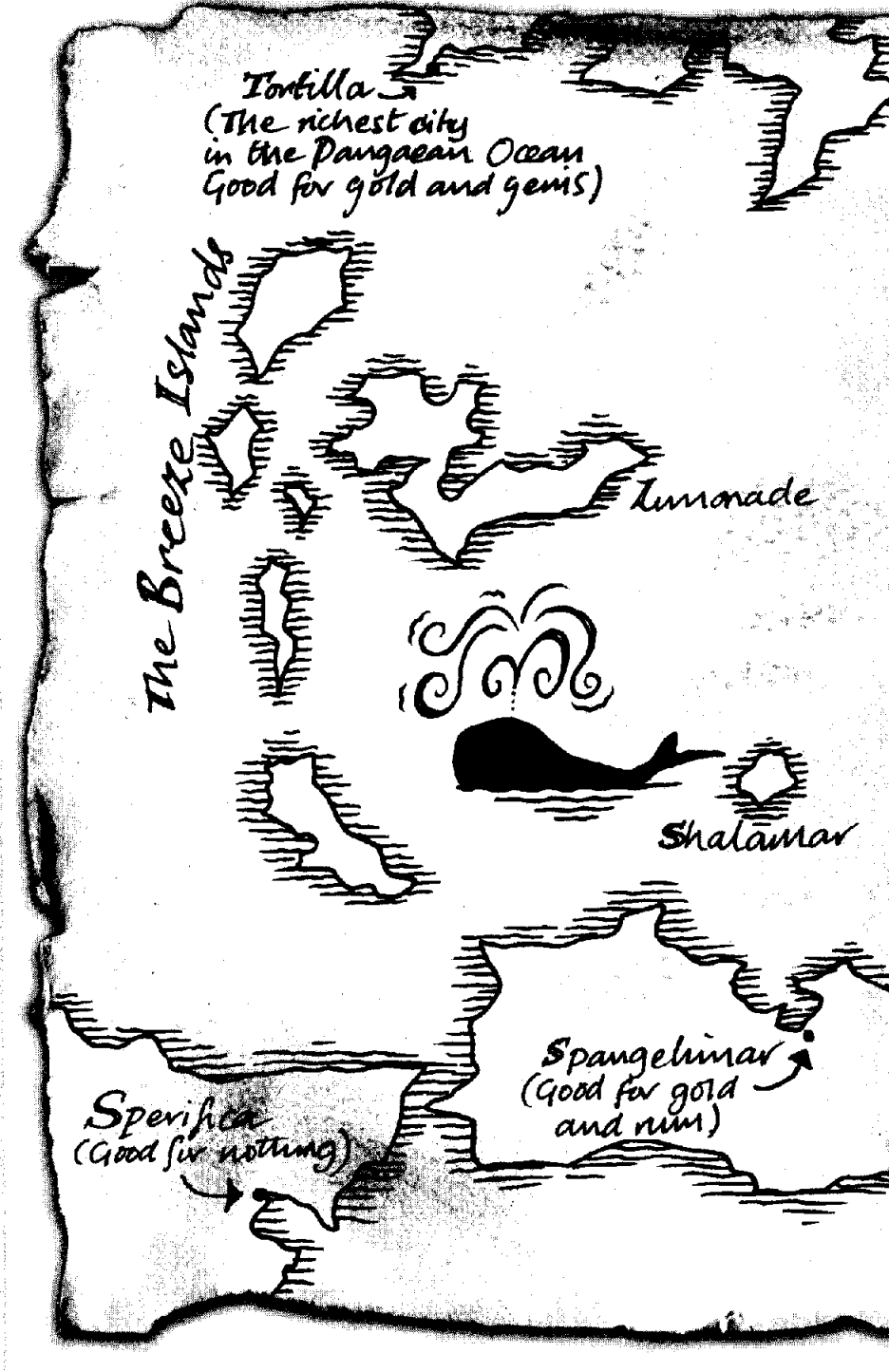
This was one of the worst situations I'd ever found myself in. Sure, I'd fought terrifying crocodiles and wrestled great apes, and even survived attacks by ravenous hyenas and massive snakes, but I'd never been locked up while my enemies discussed how to finish me off!

What were they planning? Was I going to be thrown from the cliffs onto the pointy rocks below? Or barbecued and served up as kebabs. Or— *Stop it*, I thought. I was beginning to scare myself, and I needed to be thinking of some way to escape.



I searched the room to see if there was anything that might be useful, and among a stack of dusty maps, hidden behind a mound of glittering golden goblets, I found a chart that showed the exact position of the pirates' island (it's on the next page). They call it Perfidy, and it's a tiny dot in the middle of a huge sea called the Pangaean Ocean.


Will I end up
in a shark
infested
sea?


Tortilla
(The richest city
in the Pangaean Ocean
Good for gold and gems)
The Breeze Islands
Lumonade
Shalamar
Spangelimar
(Good for gold
and rum)
Sperifica
(Good for nothing)

Anyone who gives away the location of Perfidy Island will be throttled

Perfidy

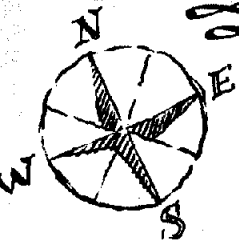


Skull Island





Pangaean Ocean





Gizzard Coast

Amonia

1000 KM

Printed by The Skeleton Press For registered pirates of the Pirate League only

Although I must have read a hundred explorer books at home, I didn't recognize any of the names on the map. But I knew it might come in useful one day, so I rolled it up and hid it inside the water bottle at the bottom of my rucksack.

As I did so, my left hand brushed against my mobile phone. My mobile! I hadn't tried to use it for ages because whenever I'd called home, Mum never listened to anything I told her. And she always replied with precisely the same words – as if it was still the same day I'd started out on my adventures and she was expecting me home for tea!

Maybe it would work properly now that I was out of the jungle, I thought hopefully.

I attached my wind-up charger, spun the handle and dialled the number.

'Mum!' I cried when she answered the phone.

'Oh, hello, darling, is everything all right?'

'Well, not really! I've been captured by pirates and locked in a treasure room—'

'Sounds wonderful, dear,' Mum said. 'Oh, wait a minute, Charlie. Here's your dad just come in. Now remember, don't be late for tea . . .'

'Mum, listen,' I whispered hoarsely. She was saying exactly the same things as before. Could she hear me? I had to make her understand. 'I'm a prisoner!' I cried. 'I'm on the island of Perfidy and—'

But just then the door flew open and the captain strode into the room.

Sentence Is Passed

'Who are you talking to, boy?' she demanded, scanning the treasure room with her dark, angry eyes.

'N-no one,' I stammered, hiding the phone behind my back. But too late – the captain had already seen it.

'What have you got there? Have you been helping yourself to my precious jewels?' she growled. 'Show me at once!'

I hesitated, and she drew her cutlass and brought it crashing down on one of the packing cases with such force that it split open; a sultan's ransom worth of treasure spilled out onto the floor. 'Come on!'

Shaking, I held out the phone. Its screen glowed bright in the gloom.

'What rare jewel is this, boy?' she gasped.

'It's a phone,' I said. 'You use it to talk to people.'

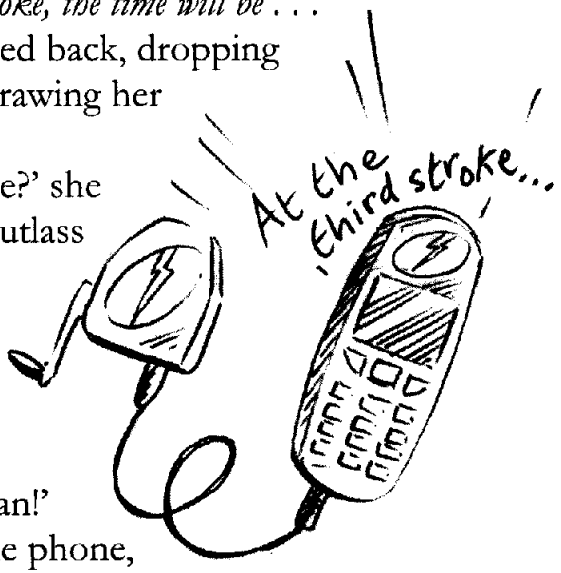
The pirate captain looked confused and I realized I'd better show her before she started swinging her cutlass again!

I quickly dialled the speaking clock and handed her my mobile.

'*At the third stroke, the time will be . . .*'

The captain leaped back, dropping the phone and drawing her sword.

'Who's in there?' she thundered, her cutlass hovering threateningly above the display screen. 'Come out and fight like a woman!'



I picked up the phone, trying to reassure the pirate captain that there was nothing to be frightened of. It was just a machine and you could talk to people on the

other side of the world with it, I explained.

'Oh, so it's a talking machine, is it?' she said in a strangely calm voice.

I nodded, and sighed with relief that I'd made her understand.

'Do you think I'm daft, boy?' she roared suddenly. 'There's no such thing! This here is a *magic* box, a wizard's toy, and it must be worth a thousand fortunes. What's more,' she added, putting my phone and charger in her pocket, 'it's *my* magic box now!'

'No!' I cried. 'I need it.' The mobile was my only link to home, and somehow I felt sure that if I lost it, I'd never be able to get back.

'You won't need it where you're going, boy.' The captain grinned.

'What do you mean?'

'It's the drop for you,' she growled, stepping so close that her rum-soaked breath made my eyes smart.

'The drop!' I cried. 'But what about me becoming your cabin boy?'

'We don't want a cabin boy, boy. We don't want males of any description on our ship, whether they're boys, men, dogs or rats. It's a female ship and that's how it'll stay. You'll be

hanged immediately from the nearest yardarm.'

What's a yardarm? I thought. Whatever it was, hanging from it didn't sound too good.

'Follow me,' she ordered and led me out into the courtyard.

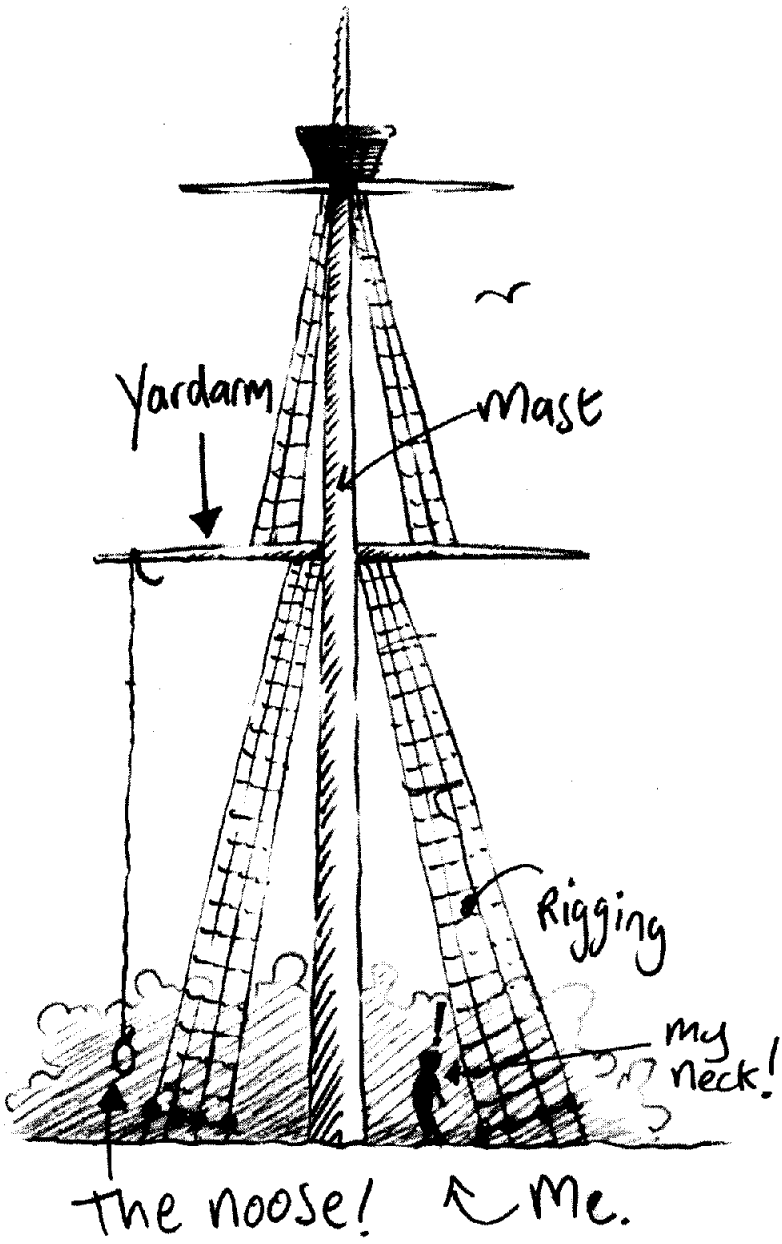
I gulped. How on earth was I going to get out of this?

The Nearest Yardarm

When my eyes had adjusted to the bright sunlight of the pirates' compound, I saw that the rest of the pirates had been busy. In the centre of the yard they had erected a ship's mast. A long rope with a noose at the end dangled from the crossbar. So that was what a yardarm was: a pirates' gallows!

I stopped in my tracks, but the captain pushed me towards the mast as one of her crew held the noose open, inviting me to put my head in.

'Just a minute,' I cried in a blind panic, and turned to the captain. My heart was pounding and my knees were knocking but I had to act


Yardarm
Mast
Rigging
my neck!
The noose!
Me.

now, before it was too late.

'What have we got here?' She smirked. 'A squeaker?'

'We like 'em when they squeak,' chorused the others. '*Oh mercy, oh save me!*'

But I wasn't going to beg for my life, I was going to *win* it. I was hoping that these sailors enjoyed a gamble as much as my Uncle Will, who was in the merchant navy.

'I bet I can climb to the top of the rigging before the best of your crew,' I said, praying that they would take up my challenge.

The captain rubbed her hands together. 'A wager, is it?' she said. 'What's the bet?'

I said that if I won, the captain had to return my phone and set me free right away.

'And if you lose?' she asked.

'If I lose,' I replied with a shiver, 'I'll put my head in the noose.'

'Agreed?' yelled the captain to the rest of the crew, and they roared their approval.