Helping your children choose books they will love

I reading

Lovereading4kids.co.uk is a book website created for parents and children to make choosing books easy and fun

opening extract from

Charlie Small: The Puppet Master's Prison

written by

Charlie Small

published by

Random House Children's Books

Copyright © Charlie Small, 2009, David Fickling Books, an imprint of The Random House Group Ltd

please print off and read at your leisure.

Lovereading4kids.co.uk

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 buried a deep-frozen corpse, burgled a house full of robbers and fought with a man three metres tall, I still look like any eight-year-old boy you might pass in the street.

I've travelled to the ends of the earth. I've fought terrifying battles and been attacked by blood-sucking bats! 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.

A slavering giant Lizard!

Invisible Enemies

A huge roar, like the howl of some gigantic beast, woke me with a start and made my heart hammer against my ribcage. I tried to open my eyes, but they were glued shut and I couldn't see a thing.

'Help!' I cried. 'What's going on?' The monster roared again, sounding very close and very angry, and I started to panic. I rubbed my eyes and felt something cold and gritty. What was it? I know . . . ice! My eyelashes had been fused together with ice.

I rubbed harder until, painfully, the ice started to pull away, taking most of my eyelashes with it. At last I could open my eyes. I expected a huge grizzly bear or a slavering giant lizard to be bearing down on me with wide, open jaws; but when I looked round all I could see was white. Everywhere and everything was completely white! The world was as blank as an empty piece of paper.

an empty
piece of paper!

What was going on? Where was I? I could still hear the roars of an invisible animal all around me. My heart beat fast as I tried to work out what to do.

Then I noticed what looked like a pale sun above me. It was glimmering weakly, as if from a trillion miles away. Instinctively I reached out towards it, and was amazed to find that I could touch it! I giggled nervously. I could touch the sun; surely that wasn't right? What's more, it was freezing cold and . . . then I realized where I was. I was in a cocoon of snow and ice that had formed around me while I had been sleeping. What I thought was the sun was really just the daylight shining through the thinnest part of the roof of my ice shell!

I punched upwards through the false sun and stuck my head out of the hole. The roar of the

mystery animal was the roar of the wind; a violent wind, full of tiny shards of ice that stabbed my cheeks like needles. I ducked back down into my shelter. I wouldn't be able to go anywhere until the storm had died down so I decided to spend the time checking myself for any injuries I might have picked up during my escape from the pernicious Perfumed Pirates of Perfidy.

You can read about that
in my second Journal – Pirate Galleon

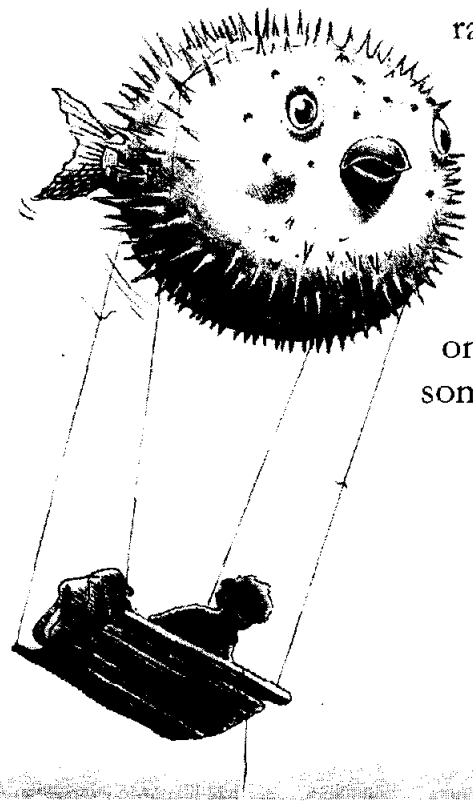
Taking Stock

I still can't quite believe that I finally managed to escape my life aboard the pirates' ship, the *Betty Mae*, and leave behind my double-crossing, deadly shipmates! I'd tried and tried again to get away, but had always been thwarted at the last minute. I was forced to go on pirate raids, helping them steal bucketloads of treasure, and in the process I made a deadly enemy of the chief thief-taker, Joseph Craik.

I did learn some useful skills though. I am now a dab hand with a cutlass, I can tie a

hundred different knots and have become such a good cook that if I could only find my way back home, I would surely be offered my own TV series; there can't be many chefs who know how to cook Seagull Beak Broth!

I then escaped with the help of a pompous, puffed-up puffer fish. The ridiculous fish had inflated itself into a hot air balloon, and we drifted across the wide Pangaean Ocean for a whole year. When we finally reached land, the puffer fish ran out of breath; we shot crazily over a mountain range and I landed, somehow fast asleep, in a drift of snow. I have no idea where the puffer fish is now, and can only hope that he is somewhere safe.



I've just opened my rucksack and emptied out its contents. I need to check my explorer's kit to make sure I haven't dropped anything on my long and precarious flight from the pirates. Luckily, it all seems to be there. My rucksack contains:

1) My multi-tooled penknife
2) A ball of string
3) A water bottle
4) A telescope
5) A scarf
6) An old railway ticket
7) This journal
8) My pyjamas (now rather tatty)
9) A pack of wild animal collector's cards
10) A glue pen (to stick any interesting finds in my book)
11) A big bag of Paterchak's mint humbugs (three quarters empty)
12) A slab of Kendal mint cake
13) A glass eye from the steam-powered rhinoceros

14) The remains of a huge slab of smoked whale meat that I took to eat on my journey
15) The hunting knife, the compass, the jungle map and the torch I found on the sun-bleached skeleton of a lost explorer
16) The tooth of a monstrous river crocodile
17) My mobile phone and wind-up charger which I managed to sneak back off Captain Cut-throat
18) A map of the Pangaean Ocean, useless to me now, but unquestionable proof of my fantastic journey!

So now I've finished checking my supplies, brought my journal up to date and repacked my trusty rucksack. Sticking my head out of the shelter again, the raw wind hit me like a slap in the face; but it has died down a little, and I really think it's about time I got moving.

Well, here goes; the sooner I start, the sooner I'll get home! I'll write more just as soon as I can.

Into White

It's been a long, wearying day, a day of complete terror and terrible confusion. But at least I can warm my frozen fingers and feet in front of an old wood-burning stove that I've found in a deserted hunter's lodge.

I had kicked away the ice shell that had formed around me and stood up . . . *Ooof!*

The cold wind hit me like a fist, knocking me straight back down again, but I struggled to my feet and then looked around. Oh no! It was no different from being inside my ice shelter!

Everything was covered in a thick layer of snow, with no tree or rock in the landscape to give me any idea of distance or scale. I pulled my coat tight around me and, glancing at the compass in my hand, set out in a westerly direction.

Perhaps my home was just a few miles away in the other direction, I don't know, but I had to go somewhere and west seemed as good a bet as any. At least I knew that by following my compass I wouldn't be trudging round and

round in circles, trapped on a featureless expanse of ice forever!

I trudged through knee-high snow and across huge frozen wastelands, watching my compass needle all the while. The air was filled with a billowing dust of snow and ice that battered me constantly as I leaned into the ferocious wind. My ears froze and my fingers throbbed painfully with the cold. I was really hungry after my year-long journey by puffer-fish balloon, but I knew that if I stopped to open my meagre rations, I might well freeze to the spot. If I was ever discovered, I would look like a perfect ice-statue of a small eight-year-old boy!

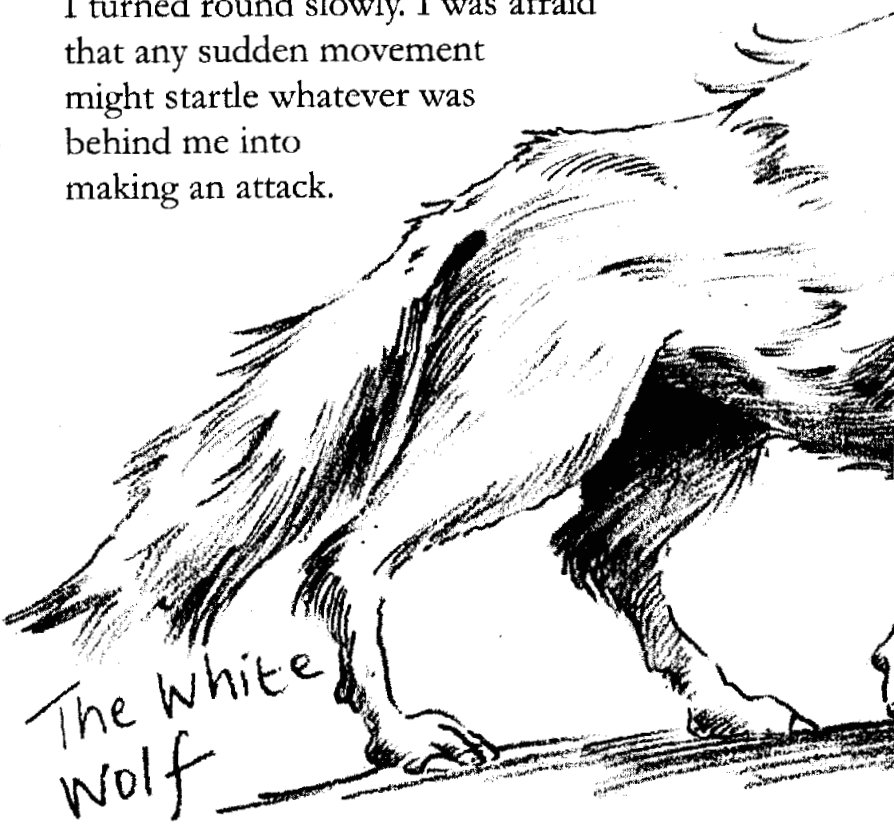
I kept moving for hour after hour and mile after mile until my brain was too cold to make any sort of decision. I didn't have the sense to stop and dig myself another shelter, and I do believe that my journey would have ended there and then in that ice-bound landscape if, all of a sudden, the wind hadn't dropped and the air cleared to reveal a weak and watery sun. I would have cheered if my jaw hadn't been frozen stiff, but I raised my

snow-encrusted arms in the air and shook them in triumph. Safe at last!

It was then that I heard a low and threatening growl coming from behind me. And this time it wasn't the wind!

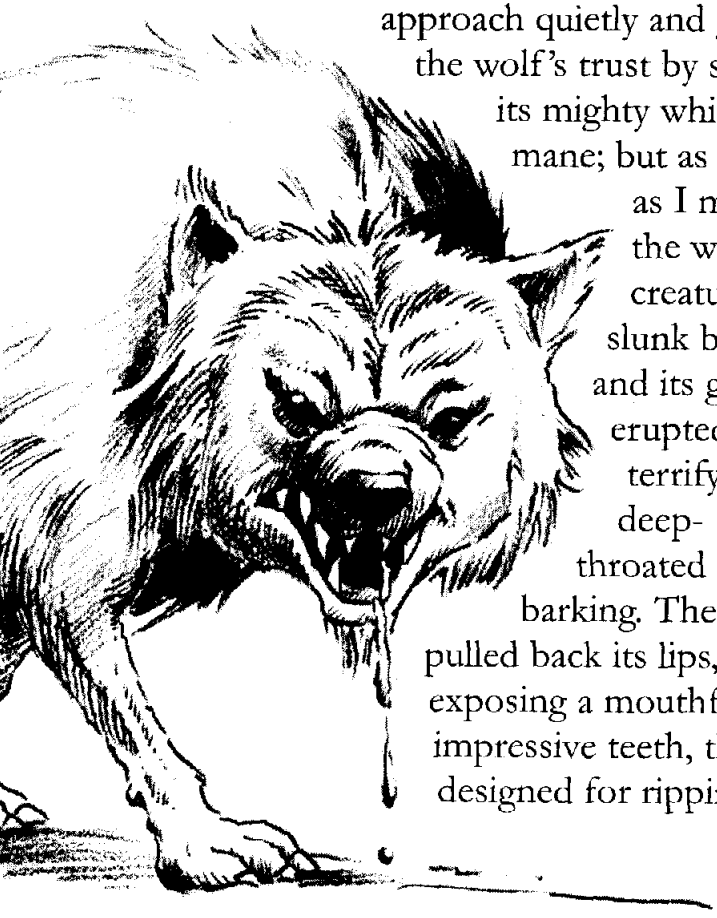
The Chase

I turned round slowly. I was afraid that any sudden movement might startle whatever was behind me into making an attack.



Inch by inch I shuffled around on the spot, until I found myself staring into the eyes of a huge, hunch-backed, pure white arctic wolf! It paced the ground restlessly, back and forth, about ten yards away. A low, constant growl rumbled in its throat as if it were powered by a diesel engine.

I took a tentative step forward, hoping to approach quietly and gain the wolf's trust by stroking its mighty white mane; but as soon as I moved, the wary creature slunk back and its growl erupted into a terrifying, deep-throated barking. The wolf pulled back its lips, exposing a mouthful of impressive teeth, the sort designed for ripping



flesh – it was, without any doubt, a wild and dangerous predator. How was I going to get out of this?

'Good dog, nice wolf,' I stuttered, backing slowly away. With every pace I retreated, the wolf took a pace forward, eyeing me warily. Great drools of saliva dripped from its jaws. It looked awfully mean and awfully hungry. I shuffled back and the wolf shuffled forward. This was hopeless; it was getting me nowhere. So I tried a different approach.

'SIT!' I yelled, and to my utter amazement the huge wolf parked its rear end in the snow and sat there. Fantastic! 'NOW STAY!' I ordered and took another pace backwards. The wolf stayed where it was! I took another step and another and still the wolf stayed put. When there was a good hundred yards between us, my nerve finally failed and I did what I had wanted to do from the very start. I turned and ran! I ran as fast as I could through the knee-deep snow. And the minute I started to run, the wolf was up off its haunches and streaking through the snow after me, howling like a banshee!