

# My Favorite Injuries

BY BEAR GRYLLS

## 1. COLD SHOULDER

In Antarctica in 2008, I was being pulled by kites on skis across the ice, and a massive gust picked me up and threw me through the air. I landed on and broke my shoulder. Because of where we were, I had a long few days with a dwindling supply of paracetamol in a tent. The shoulder's still a bit niggly, but it's okay—people live with worse.

## 2. PACK BACK

For fun, I went on a routine jump in Zimbabwe while I was on leave. We were about 14,000 feet in the air. The canopy of my chute didn't open properly, and I started coming down. Fast. Before I knew it: boom. My back landed right on the reserve chute, which is tightly packed like a bar across the middle of my back. Then everything went a little black. Later, I remember arriving at a hospital where a doctor stuck this giant needle straight into my back and I tried to stand up. Eventually, I learned I'd broken three vertebrae. I got worse before I got better—things looked grim. So I focused my recovery on a goal: Everest. Eighteen months later, I summited.

## 3. PIZZA CHEST

People always ask if the unglamorous scar on my chest was from wrestling a crocodile or something crazy. Nope. I got it five years ago when I was taking a hot pizza out of the oven in a hurry while wearing swimming trunks and branded myself right across the nipple.

## 4. EVEREST LUNGS

Right after I got back from Everest, I went sailing with some buddies. We were doing a lot of free diving, where you hold your breath and dive down deep into the water. We had really pushed it. I got back to the UK and started coughing up blood. Nobody knew what it was. Then the

doctor goes, "Have you been to extremes of high and low altitudes recently?" I tell him, "I have been to the summit of Everest and then did a 100-foot underwater free dive." "Well, that might explain it." I spent a bad Christmas Day in the hospital for that.

## 5. KARATE NOSE

I broke my nose just once. It was in a karate fight for my black-belt examination when I was about 16. I won the fight, though my nose has been wonky and veering to the left ever since.

## 6. CAMERA THIGH

We were filming *Man vs. Wild* in the Canadian Rockies when a camera and a whole metal rig went free-falling down a mountain where I'd just come to a stop at the bottom. It all missed my head by inches and smashed into my left leg, which blew up like the size of two footballs on each side of it and had a massive hematoma that earned a helicopter extraction. If that camera had hit my head, it would have killed me outright. Out of all my accidents, that one was a really close call.

## 7. SCORPION SHIN

I got a really good scorpion bite on my shin in the Sahara desert when I was with the French foreign legion in 2004. It's since developed a bit of grisly scar tissue, like somebody's put a broad bean under the skin of my shin. My kids love feeling that one.

*As told to Joshua St. Clair*

► Bear Grylls, a former member of British special forces, is the star of *Running Wild* on NBC and the author of the outdoor survival manual *How to Stay Alive* (William Morrow Paperbacks).

