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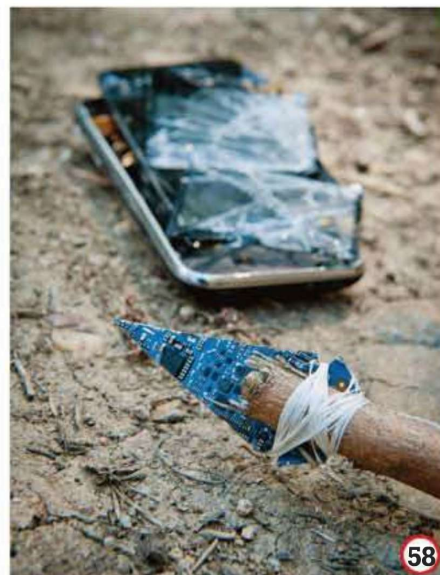
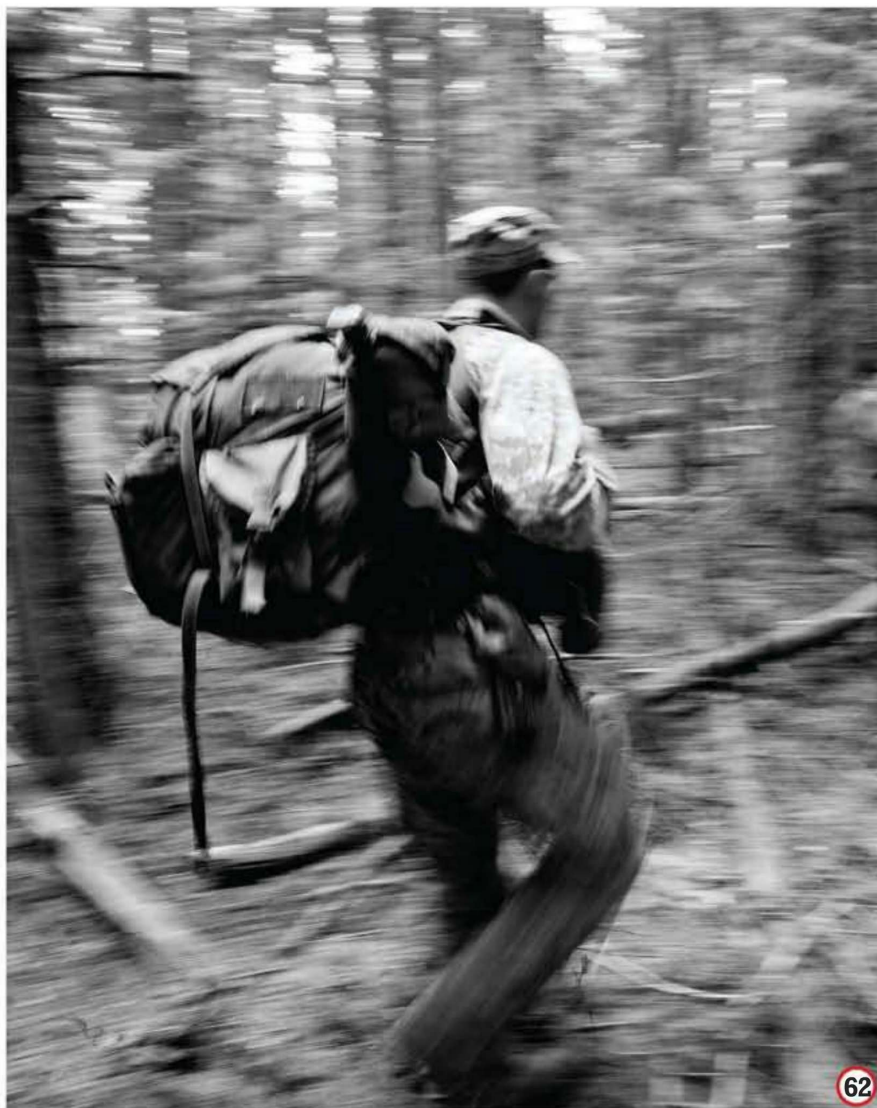
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**60
SECONDS
TO LIVE
NOW
WHAT?**



58 SAVED BY A SOCK

No survival kit? No problem. You already have plenty of common items in your pack that can multitask as lifesaving tools. Your socks? Use them as crampons, dew-soaking sponges, water filters, and more. **By Kristin Hostetter**

62 SURVIVAL BOOTCAMP

When an Air Force crew goes down behind enemy lines, evading capture is priority #1. But finding food, water, and shelter follow closely. **Brian Mockenhaupt** goes inside the top-secret training school that prepares soldiers for the worst-case scenario.

74 PROFILES IN (DIS)COURAGE

Seeing is believing: Here's photographic proof of nature's power to hurt—and hikers' ability to heal. Meet four survivors who lived through horrific accidents and returned to the wilderness against all odds. **By Jason Stevenson**

82 DIE ANOTHER DAY

The surest way to get in trouble in the backcountry? Keep going forward when you should really be going back. One stubborn mountaineer examines the fine line between triumph and tragedy. **By Mark Jenkins**



PROFILES IN (DIS)COURAGE

Broken, but not beaten, four backcountry travelers tap unexpected reserves to overcome horrific injuries. **By Jason Stevenson**

Brenna Fisch, 21

Accident Fell while hiking **Injuries** Frontal bone (forehead) fracture, six broken vertebrae, and a detached ear

The University of Colorado student was enjoying a short hike in September 2010 when she stopped to rest on a rocky perch just below a popular climbing area in Boulder Canyon. Then she slipped—and bounced 40 feet down the steep hillside. Twelve hours later, two hikers found Brenna Fisch bleeding, hypothermic, and laying in the trail with a dent in her forehead. She stayed in the hospital for a month as doctors monitored her brain swelling and patched the fracture with a titanium plate, using IV antibiotics to ward off infection. Two years after the accident, Fisch says she's still not 100 percent, but she is hiking again, and her memory and focus continue to improve. "I lost the feeling that nature is always a safe and peaceful place, but I'm enjoying life and the outdoors more than I ever have," she says. "And now, when I'm hiking alone, I always tell someone where I'm going and when to expect me back."



Justin Harris, 40

Accident Canyoneering fall

Injuries Spiral tibia fracture and compartment syndrome

Justin Harris and his younger brother Jeremy were prepared for the 80-foot rappels and chest-high pools they'd encounter on the seven-hour descent of Chute Canyon in Utah's San Rafael Swell. But when the Parowan, Utah, resident slipped on a straightforward 12-foot drop and shattered his left leg below the knee, everything changed. "I didn't know if I'd ever get out of that canyon," he says, recalling the 2003 incident. Temperatures plunged to 9°F overnight as Jeremy hiked alone to summon help, a five-hour trip that took more than 22 because he missed a turn. Rescuers didn't reach Harris until a day and a half after the accident. By that time, his kidneys were shutting down, and swelling in his leg had cut off circulation to his foot. "I was mentally prepared for another day [in the canyon], but things with my body were serious. I wasn't sure I'd live until I heard the rescuers' voices," recalls Harris. Six weeks later, he and his doctors decided to amputate. His left tibia had broken in so many places that he couldn't overcome the swelling and infection. After a long, uncertain, and painful wait, "it was a relief to let my leg go and start healing," says Harris. Seven months after surgery, he returned to coaching his son's football team atop a \$22,000 titanium and carbon fiber prosthetic. He has since skied, hiked, and even scrambled to the top of Zion's Angels Landing. "I have a greater respect for the outdoors," he says. "I've scaled back on the extremes, but my injury has challenged me to do more and stay strong."

PHOTO BY MIKE SCHIRF; BEN FULLERTON (PREVIOUS SPREAD)





Danelle Ballengee, 41

Accident Slipped while trail running **Injuries** Shattered pelvis, three broken vertebrae, and major internal bleeding

In December 2006, Danelle Ballengee was five miles into an eight-mile run on the redrock plateaus between Moab, Utah, and the Colorado River when she slipped and tumbled 60 feet down a rocky slope. Multiple impacts shattered her pelvis in at least four places, the fractures ultimately causing one-third of her blood supply to hemorrhage into her abdomen. The three-time Primal Quest champion and four-time Pikes Peak Marathon winner milked two energy gels and a puddle of water to stay alive for two days and nights. "Even as I was laying there dying," she says, "I was thinking about my future and my family. The cold was so miserable and most people wouldn't have made it. I feel lucky that I did." She credits her survival, in part, to her endurance-athlete's strength and determination: To keep warm in subfreezing temperatures, she did hundreds of painful sit-ups. She also huddled against her dog—a mutt named Taz (pictured) that eventually left her side and miraculously led rescuers back to her location. "Had it been any warmer, I would have bled to death. And if it had been any colder, I would have died of hypothermia," says Ballengee, whose pelvis holds two four-inch screws and a titanium plate. She thinks about her ordeal almost every day, but rather than upsetting her, "it reminds me how lucky I am to be here." Nearly six years after the accident, Ballengee is still undergoing physical therapy, but she hits the trail almost daily. And she points out an unexpected upside: "I move at a slower pace now and explore the canyons I always used to hurry past."







Melissa McQueen, 37

Accident Lost in a snow storm **Injury** Severe frostbite

Fifteen hours after setting out for the 14,265-foot summit of Colorado's Mt. Evans in May 2001, fifth-grade teacher Melissa McQueen was huddled under a tree, not sure whether she'd make it off the mountain alive. A spring blizzard had forced the Denver resident and her husband, father-in-law, and dog off the summit, and they'd lost the trail in the whiteout. That's when McQueen punched through the snow into a stream, soaking her feet. "My toes turned into frozen blocks, and we all had hypothermia," she says. "It was sort of a blessing because we weren't aware enough to be as terrified as we should have been." The next morning, the storm cleared, allowing them to escape alive. Thawing frostbite "is the worst pain you can imagine," reports McQueen, whose feet soon blistered and turned black. "It's as if sharp shards of glass have ripped your flesh apart." The extensive tissue damage cost her eight toes—and threatened to rob her of her identity as an outdoor adventurer. But less than six months later, McQueen attempted Mt. Bierstadt, another Colorado Fourteener. She's since attempted the summits of Mt. Rainier and Grand Teton, and stood triumphant atop Kilimanjaro. "After the surgery, I spent months in a wheelchair, but walking again was surprisingly easy. I use inserts to cushion the balls of my feet and trekking poles to brake on downhills," McQueen says. "And these days, I go weeks without even thinking about that day on Mt. Evans."