

# BEAR GRYLLS

MISSION SURVIVAL



# CLAWS OF THE CROCODILE

*An adventure to get your teeth stuck into . . .*

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## About the Book

This is not your typical summer holiday.

Searing heat, poisonous snakes, hungry crocodiles . . .

No water for thousands of miles, and nothing to eat but grubs and insects.

That's not to mention the men who are trying to kill you.

Beck Granger is stranded in the Australian Outback, and his survival skills are the only thing that can save him.

An explosive adventure series from real-life survival expert BEAR GRYLLS. Includes special tips on how to survive in the wild.

MISSION  SURVIVAL

# CLAWS OF THE CROCODILE



# BEAR GRYLLS

RHCP DIGITAL

To my sister Lara.  
Best friend. Best sister.  
I love you.

# CHARACTER PROFILES

## **Beck Granger**

At just thirteen years old, Beck Granger knows more about the art of survival than most military experts learn in a lifetime. When he was young he travelled with his parents to some of the most remote places in the world, from Antarctica to the African Bush, and he picked up many vital survival skills from the tribes he met along the way.

## **Uncle Al**

Professor Sir Alan Granger is one of the world's most respected anthropologists. His stint as a judge on a reality television show made him a household name, but to Beck he will always be plain old Uncle Al - more comfortable in his lab with a microscope than hob-nobbing with the rich and famous. He believes that patience is a virtue and has a 'never-say-die' attitude to life. For the past few years he has been acting as guardian to Beck, who has come to think of him as a second father.

## **David & Melanie Granger**

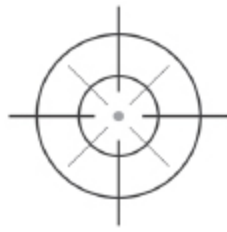
Beck's mum and dad were Special Operations Directors for the environmental direct action group, Green Force. Together with Beck, they spent time with people who live in some of the world's most extreme places. Several years ago their light plane mysteriously crashed in the jungle. Their bodies were never found and the cause of the accident remains unknown . . .

## **Brihony Stewart**

Beck first met Brihony on a trip to Australia with his parents several years ago, but they have since lost touch. She is a passionate expert on crocodile conservation and likes to think of them as people rather than animals. She may have grown a lot in the years since Beck knew her, but she is still as friendly and likeable as she ever was - if a little blunt at times!







# Chapter 1

*Beck Granger is off to Australia!*

Beck Granger had typed those words with a song in his heart. Finally, a month into the longest and most boring summer holidays *ever*, something was going to happen.

That was before supper. Now he had come back upstairs and checked his laptop to see how many friends had noticed his new status. He smiled when he saw the first name in the list of comments.

*Peter Grey - Awesome sauce! You kept that quiet. Wish I was going with you but parents would have a fit lol.*

Peter was his oldest friend from school. Their last two holidays together had been eventful: during the first they had been forced to parachute out of a plane into the middle of the Sahara, escaping from murderous diamond smugglers. On the next one, a volcanic eruption had left them stranded in the Indonesian jungle. Threatened by illegal loggers, tigers and crocodiles, they had finally made their way back to civilization.

Yes, Peter's parents would certainly think twice before letting their son go off with Beck again.

These had been quite normal holidays for Beck. Except for the people trying to kill him. That was a little more unusual.

Beck's earliest memories were of travelling with his parents - before they went missing. The reason was always the same: Beck's father had been Special Operations Director of an environmental organization called Green Force, which worked for change through direct action. Whether it was highlighting the plight of an endangered species, or championing the cause of a native people, or encouraging sustainable development in an area where modern farming was wreaking havoc - Green Force were there at the front line.

The work had taken his parents around the world, so Beck had found himself with remote tribes in the most extreme spots, from the poles to the equator. And for a white English boy he had proved unusually good at learning how to stay alive. After his parents had vanished, Beck had travelled with his Uncle Al instead.

Now he was in his early teens. When it came to school grades, he knew he would never be more than so-so. When it came to survival, he knew he was up there with the best; but always with more to learn - like how to put up with a long, tedious English summer at home.

He typed a quick reply to Peter. *Didn't know till just now. I'll get you a cuddly koala!*

It had seemed like a good idea to keep the summer break empty. He had enjoyed the rest at first. Spending every night in his own bed. Eating cooked food that you'd actually bought in a shop. No one trying to kill him. These were all things he had felt he needed more of.

But now, halfway through the summer, he was itching for some excitement. He had been spending too much time on PlaceSpace, where his friends shared their holiday plans; he had never imagined that he would be envious of anyone heading for a hotel in Spain.

He had realized how bad it was when he found himself typing out survival advice to Peter:

*Look out for hypothermia. It's not just shivering. Your speech gets sluggish and you lose coordination . . .*

Peter and his family were in a caravan park in Wales. Hypothermia, a fatal cooling of the body's core temperature, was not going to be a problem. Beck had the problem. He just wasn't used to being the one stuck at home.

But then Uncle Al had dropped his bombshell.

'How do you fancy a trip Down Under?' he had asked.

Beck had almost cheered. Almost. But one thing he had learned: always get all the facts. And so he had just glanced sideways at his uncle. 'Why . . .?'

Al had smiled at the wary tone. There was always a reason when they went travelling. 'It won't be five-star, I'm afraid. We'll be staying on the Casuarina campus of the University of Charles Darwin. It's all academic stuff. But for you - well, there's beaches, there's the national park, there's sailing . . .'

Al did not have to sell the idea to Beck. Just getting out of the house was enough.

'And what are *you* doing?' Beck asked.

Al looked slightly embarrassed, but pleased at the same time. 'They want to award me an honorary doctorate for my work on the impact of the first Aboriginal people on the prehistoric Australian environment.'

'Cool!' Beck was impressed, and glad for his uncle.

Uncle Al - Professor Sir Alan Granger, to the outside world - had dedicated his life to environmental causes. Becoming Beck's guardian when Beck's parents went missing in an air crash hadn't slowed him down. It wasn't always easy; sometimes it was downright dangerous. Al had upset a lot of powerful people in his time, and Beck reckoned it was only right for his work to be recognized.

'Sure, let's go Down Under!'

It was all too complicated to explain on PlaceSpace. Beck would give Peter the full story the next time they saw each other. He ran his eyes down the list of comments to the next name. What he saw made him sit up.

*Brihony Stewart - That's great news! We can catch up. Come and see us in Broome?*

Brihony! He hadn't seen her in years - not since . . . well, not since the last trip to Australia. She had been pretty cool, but he still tried not to think much about that particular trip. He had had a great time - mostly. But he had gone out with two parents and come home an orphan.

As representatives of Green Force, Beck's parents had gone out to the Kimberley, the region at the top end of Western Australia, to help an Aboriginal tribe fight a legal

case. Beck had been taken under the wing of the tribal elders – once they realized that this English kid really *did* want to learn from them. He had assimilated a huge amount about surviving in the Outback.

What had been the name of his teacher? Pen . . . Pan . . . Pindari, that was it. A tough old guy, really hard to please, so that when you *did* please him, you really felt it had been worth it. His name meant ‘high rocks’, and he really was as tough as the ancient, sun-baked rocks of the Kimberley. Beck wondered where he was now.

So, yes, a great time . . . up until the moment his parents’ plane crashed and Beck’s life changed for ever.

Beck called up Google Maps to look up Broome, and also Darwin, where he and Al were going. Darwin was in the Northern Territory, nowhere near the Kimberley.

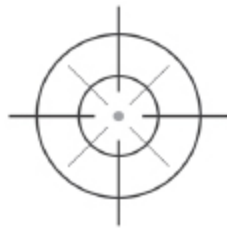
If Australia was a clock, then Darwin was perched on the north coast at the twelve o’clock position. Broome was at about ten o’clock. It looked no distance at all, but Beck wasn’t fooled. The thing he remembered most clearly about Australia was that it was *enormous*. You could drop several United Kingdoms into it and they would just rattle around.

He looked at the scale in the corner of the screen, and saw that there was a good 600 miles between the two places. That was as the crow flies – a very long-distance crow with extra fuel tanks added. Go by road and it was 1,000 miles or more. Australia was big.

So, nice as it would be, he had to accept that he might not be seeing Brihony on this trip. But he didn’t want to be negative, and who knew?

So he typed:

*Yeah that would be cool. I’ll let Al know.*



## Chapter 2

Twenty-one hours after leaving London, Beck finally managed to get some sleep. After what seemed like five minutes, Al was nudging him out of it. He gestured at the window of the Airbus and spoke in a terrible Australian accent.

‘Welcome back, mate! That’s the Kimberley out there.’

Beck peered blearily out from a height of 30,000 feet. ‘Wow . . .’

Australia just *went on and on*. The vast plains disappeared into the horizon. Dust from the dry, arid ground blended into the haze of the sky so that it was impossible to see the join. The continent seemed to stretch on out over the edge of the world.

He thought again of his last visit. His parents - and Brihony’s - had been helping an Aboriginal tribe called the Jungun to prepare a case to take to the Australian High Court. Two hundred years earlier, an English farmer had taken a liking to some land; he had put a fence around it and claimed it as his own. The Jungun had already been living there for thousands of years, but that was easily taken care of: the farmer had guns and dogs; the Jungun did not.

Two hundred years on, the descendants of those Jungun had sued the descendants of the farmer, claiming their land back.

Beck looked out at the landscape and wondered why anyone was fool enough to think they could own any of it.

He also thought of Brihony. Once again he reminded himself that he wasn’t going to the Kimberley this time. He and Al were heading for Darwin. One of the many things Pindari, his Aboriginal mentor, had taught him was not to live in the past. Be in the present; look to the future.



So, here in the present, Beck merely said: ‘Was that meant to sound like an Australian?’

‘Wasn’t it any good?’

‘It was great – if all Australians sound like a middle-aged Englishman.’

‘If you don’t mind, I’m an *elderly* Englishman, and proud of it.’

Beck laughed, and then the captain announced their arrival at Darwin within the hour.

There seemed to be a universal law that said passport queues had to be long and slow and boring. It had been like that in every airport Beck had ever visited, and the one at Darwin International was no exception.

He had turned on his phone a little while ago, and left it to sort itself out with the Australian network. Now, as they slowly shuffled forward, he swiped the screen to unlock it, and casually checked his emails and messages.

The PlaceSpace app notified him of a private message. Brihony again, maybe? He gave the screen a tap.

*Jim Rockslide . . .*

Beck froze, staring at his phone. It couldn’t be! That was impossible! Thoughts whirled around his head. How on earth did a message from Jim Rockslide—

‘Beck . . .?’ Al said gently, and Beck realized the queue had moved forward a couple of metres without him noticing. He hurried forward, then looked back at the phone. Al asked if something was the matter, but he just shook his head.

The message read: *Jim Rockslide - Friday 31st. Broome. Follow the White Dragon.*

Jim Rockslide? But Jim Rockslide didn’t exist!

Jim Rockslide was a made-up character. Beck’s dad used to tell him adventure stories about Jim Rockslide, the Hero Geologist who fought Nazis and aliens and smugglers all across the globe.

Beck jabbed at the PROFILE button to find out more about the sender. The profile page was empty, with just the standard outline of a human head instead of a photo. And that made sense, because Beck knew full well that only two people in the whole world had ever heard of Jim. Beck's dad, and Beck himself.

So how was a character made up by a dead man sending messages via PlaceSpace to Beck's phone?

Beck was still in a daze when they finally passed through passport control. He barely noticed the wait at baggage reclaim or their emergence into the arrivals area. If Al noticed he wasn't saying anything, he probably put it down to jetlag.

Beck's thoughts whirled. He could only think of one way he might have received that message . . .

His father was still alive.

No, he told himself immediately, his father *couldn't* still be alive.

OK, his parents' bodies had never been found, but . . .

But if they *were* still alive, then they must have only *pretended* to be dead all these years. He couldn't think of a single good reason why they would do that. How cruel would that be? What kind of a trick was that to play on their only son?

No, his parents were dead. They *had* to be.

But Jim Rockslide was sending him messages.

Round and round his thoughts went, and eventually one simple certainty came out of it all. Whatever this was about, whoever was sending him those messages . . . Today was Tuesday the 28th. He needed to be in Broome on Friday the 31st.

'Oh, good grief . . .'

It took Beck a moment to realize that his uncle had said something. Al had got out his tablet as the taxi threaded its