

5TH APRIL EVEREST BASE CAMP, KHUMBU ICEFALL

WE HAD OUR FIRST PRACTICE DAY IN THE ICEFALL TODAY! OH MY GOD WHAT A DAY! AS WE WERE ONLY PRACTICING WE LEFT CAMP AT 9.30AM WITH PATO, OUR DOC, MISAIL, KIKO, ERNESTO, PHILLIPE)OUR CAMERA MAN WHO HAD NEVER WORN CRAMPONS BEFORE) MYSELF AND ALL OUR HIGH ALTITUDE SHERPAS WHO ARE JUST AMAZING, THE CLINT EASTWOODS OF THE MOUNTAIN, I ALMOST EXPECT THEM TO SHOW UP CHEWING ON TOOTH PICKS! DUE TO A HEAVY SNOWFALL THIS WINTER THE ICEFALL IS MUCH BIGGER THIS YEAR, SO ITS A LONG WAY UP AND DOWN BEFORE YOU REACH ANY OF THE LADDERS. I BUMPED INTO ED VIEUSTERS AND VEIKER WHO HAD BEEN UP TO CAMP 1 ON THEIR FIRST ACCLIMATIZATION TRIP, THEY HAD BEEN UP AND DOWN IN ABOUT 6 HOURS! EVERYTHING WENT FINE UNTIL I GOT TO THE FIRST LADDER. AGAINST EVERYONE'S ADVICE, THE FIRST THING I DID WAS LOOK DOWN AND PROCEEDED TO FREEZE. AS I GLARED DOWN INTO THIS BOTTOMLESS ABYSS, I COULDN'T COMMIT MY 2ND STEP. EVENTUALLY, PASANG OUR CLIMBING SIDHAR COAXED ME ACROSS AND WITH SEWING MACHINE LEGS) CAUSING THE WHOLE LADDER TO SHAKE) I SOMEHOW GOT ACROSS AND STUMBLED INTO PASANGS ARMS!) DON'T THINK HE EXPECTED THAT ONE!) WE THEN CAME TO A BIGGER CREVASSE AND LADDER CROSSING AND HERE I STAYED PRACTICING. I SAW DAVID BREASHEARS COMING DOWN FROM A MORNINGS FILMING HIGHER UP THE MOUNTAIN AND HE SHOWED ME HOW ITS REALLY DONE AND JUST RAN ACROSS. I WAS WARNED THAT HIGHER UP THE MOUNTAIN IS A HUGE CREVASSE CROSSING WITH 5 LADDERS TIED TOGETHER, I AM ABSOLUTELY DREADING THIS ONE!

I'VE CONCLUDED THAT, HAVING TRIED BOTH WAYS OF COURSE, CROSSING THE LADDERS ON ALL FOURS IS MY PREFERENCE. BEFORE YOU ALL LAUGH, IM KEEPING VERY GOOD COMPANY IN THIS METHOD OF CROSSING, NO NAMES MENTIONED, BUT A FEW OTHER PEOPLE ARE DOING THE SAME! I WAS FURIOUS TO SEE PHILLIPE OUR CAMERAMAN FILMING MY REAR AS I CRAWLED ACROSS ONE OF THESE LADDERS, ALL I NEED IS A DUMMY IN MY MOUTH TO COMPLETE THE PICTURE! PHILLIPE WAS AMAZING AND ALSO MANGED TO CROSS SOME OF THESE LADDERS, EVEN THOUGH HE HAD NEVER USED CRAMPONS BEFORE.

I RETURNED TO BASE CAMP AS FAST AS POSSIBLE, TARZANING DOWN THE FIXED LINES WITH LAMPU SHERPA, I AM DETERMINED TO MOVE THROUGH THE ICEFALL FAST. I WAS SOON BACK AT BASE CAMP HAVING LUNCH WITH RODRIGO JORDAN AND TELLING HIM DRAMATICALLY ALL ABOUT IT! I WAS VERY EXCITED TO HEAR THAT 2 OF THE DISCOVERY TEAM MEMBERS, HECTOR AND ANDREW HAD BEEN OVER TO VISIT RODRIGO WHILST I WAS IN THE ICE FALL AND THAT THEIR DIRECTOR DAVID HAD ASKED WHETHER I MINDED BEING PART OF THEIR SERIES THAT THEY ARE MAKING ON EVEREST. I TRIED TO LOOK VAGUELY PRESENTABLE AND HID MY GREASY HAIR IN MY ARCTERYX HAT, AND SCHLEPPED ACROSS BASECAMP TO THE DISCOVERY TENTS) WE ARE AT OPPOSITE ENDS OF BASECAMP) AND PRAYED THEY WOULDN'T SEE ME

STUMBLING AMATEURISHLY ACROSS THE ROCKS AS I ARRIVED AT THEIR CAMP. I SPENT SOME TIME TALKING TO THEM, THEY ARE ALL GREAT AND I LOVED MEETING SHANNA WHOM I FEEL I HAVE A LOT IN COMMON WITH IN TERMS OF OUR GOALS, EXCEPT SHE USED TO BE A DOWNHILL SKI RACER FOR CANADA WHICH MADE ME GREEN WITH ENVY.

AS HALF MY GROUP WERE IN LOBUCHE SEEING OFF ANDRONICOS SISTERS AND MARCELLO, WHO HAS ALREADY SET UP OUR WHOLE COMMUNICATIONS SYSTEM, I WENT OVER TO DAVID BREASHEARS CAMP FOR DINNER. THEIR MESS TENT IS UNBELIEVABLE, TIBETAN RUGS ON THE FLOOR, STATE OF THE ART COMMUNICATIONS, YOU FEEL LIKE YOU ARE SOMEPLACE ELSE NOT AT EVEREST BASE CAMP. I HAD A GREAT DINNER WITH ALL OF THEM AND THEN STUMBLED IN THE SNOW BACK TO OUR CAMP, THANK GOD WE ARE NEIGHBOR. ITS SNOWING HEAVILY AND IM IN MY TENT EXHAUSTED, WE ARE GOING BACK INTO THE ICEFALL AGAIN TOMORROW TO PRACTICE ON THOSE DREADED LADDERS. BASECAMP FEELS LIKE A SMALL VILLAGE, ITS ACTUALLY VERY PRETTY WITH ALL THE PRAYER FLAGS STREWN FROM ALL THE PUJA CEREMONY LOCATIONS. IM TOO TIRED TO WRITE ANYMORE SO GOODNIGHT FROM A SNOWY EBC!