

SURVIVAL STORIES

Here are some amazing stories of people who survived near-death experiences—some by their own wits and some by dumb luck.

S PIN CYCLE

In May 2011, a tornado was roaring through Lenox, Iowa, when 11-year-old Austin Miller got a call from his mother, Jessica, who was at work: “Get in the laundry room NOW!” Jessica tried to drive home, but her way was blocked by a wall of debris, so she took shelter in her mother-in-law’s cellar. After the tornado passed, she ran to her own house. The roof had collapsed, and there was no sign of Austin. Just then, the clothes-dryer door popped open and out he came. He had squeezed in just in time to ride out the storm.

CAN YOU HEAR ME NOW?

In May 2010, a Canadian man (unidentified in press reports) broke his leg and got lost in a remote forest near Wollaston Lake in Saskatchewan. After four days, no rescuers came, so the desperate man crawled through the forest with his ax until he found a power-line pole and chopped it down. A helicopter was dispatched by SaskPower to investigate the incident and found the man “in a very distressed state.” He later made a full recovery.

GREAT WHITE FLOSSER

Martin Kane, 62, was paddling his surf-ski (a type of sea kayak) off the coast of Perth, Western Australia, in June 2012, when he felt a big BUMP—which is not something you want to feel in the middle of the ocean. At first he thought he’d been rammed by a Jet Ski, but then he saw the fin. It belonged to a Great White shark, and it was coming back for more. Before Kane knew it, his surf-ski had been bitten in half and he was in the water fighting off the shark with his paddle. Suddenly the shark stopped attacking but continued to thrash around. Another paddler came over and scooped Kane from the water. As they made their way back to shore, Kane figured out why the shark had let up: “Its teeth were caught up in the stringers that run down the length of the ski. It was too bothered trying to get rid of the ski to chase me.”

How the French say “lol” in text messages: *mdr*, short for *mort de rive*—“I died of laughter.”

DRINK PLENTY OF FLUIDS

Hank Miller, 84, of Anthem, Arizona, got lost in 2011 after he took the wrong highway exit and ended up 20 miles down a dirt road with his SUV stuck, unable to get back on the road. Miller used the floor mats as a blanket to stay warm at night, but ran out of food and water quickly. Days passed. With no other sustenance, he opened the truck's hood and dipped a napkin into the windshield washer fluid basin to keep hydrated. After five days, a helicopter pilot found Miller; he was weak but in good spirits. His friends weren't the least bit surprised he survived the ordeal. Said one, "That's just Hank being Hank."

TORRENTIAL DRAINS

Eight-year-old Kenny Markiewicz was playing in a big puddle in Proctor, Minnesota, the day after major flooding occurred in 2012. All of a sudden, he was gone. His mom, Amber, felt around for him when a powerful suction nearly pulled her into a small culvert opening barely 2½-feet wide. Sometime later, more than half a mile a way, a searcher heard crying in the forest. It was Kenny—bleeding and dazed. He'd been sucked into the storm drain and carried six blocks before being dumped out in the woods. "I hate that ride!" he said.

A WOMB WITH A VIEW

In 1992 Jessica Evers took a gunshot to the arm—and she hadn't even been born. It was the second day of major rioting in Los Angeles. Jessica's mother, Elvira—seven-months pregnant at the time—was shot in the stomach while trying to get to her apartment. With no ambulances available, a friend drove her to the hospital, where she fell into a coma. When she awoke a week later, she cried, "Oh my God, my baby!" But the nurse calmed her down and explained that an emergency C-section had saved the little girl. (The bullet was removed post-delivery.) In a way, the baby saved her mother's life. "If Jessica hadn't caught that bullet in her arm," said Elvira, "we'd both be dead." In 2012 MSNBC interviewed 20-year-old Jessica, who said her prenatal brush with death had impacted her entire life. "As each day goes by, I try to find out what I'm here for. I'm innocent, but then again there are other innocent people that got hurt, too. One thing's for sure, I'm still here."

Rule of thumb: The longer the bone in the finger or toe, the faster the nail will grow.