

Beating the odds is always a great feeling. Take the startling case of Mitsutaka Uchikoshi. One ice-cold October day in 2006, Uchikoshi had been with a group on a mountain in western Japan. Stories like these remind us that even when we are in a situation that seems impossible, we should never give up.

For days, Le Marque struggled through hunger, freezing temperatures, and 12-foot (4-meter) deep snow. After being fitted with artificial limbs, he vowed to go snowboarding again. At the age of 23, while she was sailing the South Pacific, Ashcraft was caught in a violent hurricane. Determined to survive, Ashcraft created a sail from scraps of material and charted a path to Hawaii, which was 1,500 miles (2,400 kilometers) away. Having lost 40 pounds (18 kilograms) during her ordeal, Ashcraft was thin and haggard when she arrived. One day in February 2004, Le Marque set out for a day of snowboarding in California's Sierra Nevada Mountains. Knowing that eating snow lowers body temperature, Le Marque ate only tree bark and pine seeds. Hibernation reduces the need for food and protects animals from damage to the brain and other organs. Just ask anyone who has been accepted to a selective college, or unexpectedly won an athletic event.

Tami Oldham Ashcraft knows this feeling. The 50-foot (15-meter) waves overturned her boat. When she awoke 27 hours later, the boat had turned right side up again, but the storm had been so violent that the sails were destroyed, the motor was dead, and the radio was lost. Only the rudder, which steers the ship, was intact. Ashcraft, who still sails, eventually told her tale of survival in a book called *Red Sky in Mourning*.

Another such tale of survival against the odds can be told by Eric Le Marque, a hockey player who played with the French national Olympic team during the 1994 Olympics. While looking for a good place to snowboard, Le Marque lost his way and ended up in the wilderness at the back of the mountain. Even more incredibly, Uchikoshi, who was treated for severe hypothermia and blood loss, made a full recovery. By the eighth day, Le Marque was so weak and his legs were so frostbitten that he could no longer walk or even stand. Le Marque was at the point of exhaustion and death when he was found by rescuers in a helicopter. Ashcraft was badly injured and disoriented. Traveling only two miles an hour, Ashcraft reached her destination 41 days later. Doctors believe that Uchikoshi's body went into a state similar to hibernation.