

**Advanced 1**  
**Unit 4 Reading**  
**Presented by Mohammad Rajabpur**

**He Survived His Own Funeral**

*Lotty Stevens from Vanuatu is a young man who survived a boating accident in 1990. He swam for 23 days in the Pacific Ocean before being rescued by a fishing boat near New Caledonia. He claimed that a stingray came to his aid and carried him on its back for 13 days and nights. His story was reported by Radio Vanuatu and the Orlando Sentinel, but it could not be verified.*

This selection is from the book *Animal Miracles*, a series of true stories in which an animal always provides the miracle. The stories are not told by professional writers but the very people who lived through the experience. Miracles are unbelievable. If they weren't, they wouldn't be miracles.

A

On January 15, 1990, eighteen-year-old Lotty Stevens and a friend embarked on a fishing trip from Port Vila, Vanuatu, an island in the South Pacific. Although both young men were experienced fishermen, they were caught off guard by a sudden storm that capsized their boat. Helplessly, Lotty and his friend were tossed about by waves as they desperately sought to stay above the water. Fortunately for Lotty, it was his habit always to slip on a life jacket when fishing in the ocean.

**embark on/upon something** = to start something new or important

**catch someone off guard** = to surprise someone by doing something that they are not expecting or ready for

**capsize** = to (cause a boat or ship to) turn upside down by accident while on water  
*A huge wave capsized the yacht.*

*When the boat capsized, we were trapped underneath it.*

B

Later, when the sea was calmer and the waves had subsided, he looked around the wreckage of their boat for his friend. After calling his name for several minutes, Lotty was forced to conclude that his companion had drowned during the storm. For three days, Lotty clung to the overturned boat, bobbing lazily up and down as the wreckage drifted aimlessly. Then, with only his life jacket for

support, he decided to swim in the direction in which he felt Port Vila lay. For two days, the teenager alternated swimming as hard as he could, then floating and resting, praying all the while for a miracle. If only some fishing boats would come upon him and rescue him. He tried hard to fight against despair. He knew that even a large ship could pass relatively close by and not be able to see his head bobbing in the vast ocean.

**subside** = If a condition subsides, it becomes less strong or extreme:

*The police are hoping that the violence will soon subside.*

*As the pain in my foot subsided, I was able to walk the short distance to the car.*

**bob** = to move up and down quickly and gently, especially on the surface of water

**alternate** = to (make something) happen or exist one after the other repeatedly

C

To and the end of the fifth day after the raging storm had sent him into the sea, Lotty Stevens got his miracle. He had been floating with his eyes closed when he felt something big lift him from the water. There beneath him was a giant stingray, at least eleven feet long - including its six-foot poisonous tail. And the massive sea beast was taking him for a ride. At first Lotty was frightened. Stingrays were not known for performing benevolent acts. But soon, he later told journalists, he began to think of the giant sea creature as his friend. He would pat it as if it were a dog. A big, slimy dog with a hard and strong body. One afternoon, after several days as a grateful hitchhiker, Lotty suddenly found himself dumped in the water as the stingray dove and disappeared. Lotty shook his head to clear the sea from his eyes - then wished that he hadn't. An enormous shark was heading straight for him.

**stingray** = a large, flat, round fish with a long tail that has poisonous points on it

**benevolent** = kind and helpful

D

Dear Lord, he silently screamed, why had his friend left him now? Was the stingray afraid of the killer beast coming toward him? Then the teenager saw a second shark - and a third. Suddenly Lotty's angel of the sea reappeared, swimming in a fast circle around him. Amazingly, the three sharks turned fin and swam away. Apparently they feared the stingray's long, poisonous tail more than they felt the desire to feed on a human. Lotty gave his thanks to God and the

stingray that had once again saved his life. The great sea creature came alongside Lotty and nudged him. So he climbed back on board its strong back.

**fin** = a thin vertical part sticking out of the body of especially a fish or an aircraft that helps balance and movement

**nudge** = to push something or someone gently, especially to push someone with your elbow (= the middle part of your arm where it bends) to attract the person's attention

E

Until the joyous morning when he at last sighted land, the teenager survived for eight more days by catching fish from atop his seaborne savior. The stingray also spotted the beach, for it headed for the shallow water and slid Lotty off near the shoreline. Lotty remembered staggering like a drunken man, then collapsing on the sandy beach. The next morning, he was awakened by a fisherman. It took the teenager several moments to realize that he was not dreaming and that he was actually once again on solid land. As he slowly came to appreciate the fact that he was no longer in danger of drowning or of being eaten by sharks, he also realized with a sudden pang of regret that he hadn't had a chance to thank his remarkable friend from the ocean for saving his life.

**stagger** = to walk or move with difficulty as if you are going to fall

F

The fisherman helped Lotty to a doctor, and later, a hospital on the main island pronounced the teenager in good shape except for some dehydration and a few sores from saltwater and chafing against his life jacket. When he telephoned his family, their grief turned to joy beyond understanding, for they had already held a funeral service for him. It had been twenty-one days since Lotty and his friend had disappeared in the ocean storm. Lotty does not argue with those who would seek to disbelieve the facts of his remarkable rescue. He is living proof that somehow he survived twenty-one boatless days adrift in the ocean. In the opinion of Lotty Stevens and his family, that most certainly qualifies as a miracle.

**pronounce** = to say something officially or certainly

**dehydration** = a drop below normal levels of water in the body

**chafe** /tʃeɪf/ = to make skin damaged or sore by rubbing, or to become damaged and sore like this

**sore** = a painful area on the surface of a body, especially an infected area

**grief** = sadness

**Full Text:**

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Later, when the sea was calmer and the waves had subsided, he looked around the wreckage of their boat for his friend. After calling his name for several minutes, Lotty was forced to conclude that his companion had drowned during the storm. For three days, Lotty clung to the overturned boat, bobbing lazily up and down as the wreckage drifted aimlessly. Then, with only his life jacket for support, he decided to swim in the direction in which he felt Port Vila lay. For two days, the teenager alternated swimming as hard as he could, then floating and resting, praying all the while for a miracle. If only some fishing boats would come upon him and rescue him. He tried hard to fight against despair. He knew that even a large ship could pass relatively close by and not be able to see his head bobbing in the vast ocean.

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### **What is the longest record of someone surviving at sea or in the ocean without food and water?**

According to the web search results, the longest record of someone surviving at sea without a boat or food is held by José Salvador Alvarenga, a Salvadoran fisherman who was found on January 30, 2014, on the Marshall Islands after spending 14 months adrift in a fishing boat in the Pacific Ocean. He survived mainly on a diet of raw fish, turtles, small birds, sharks and rainwater. He is the first person in recorded history to have survived in a small boat lost at sea for more than a year. Other stories of survival at sea include Deborah Kiley, who survived five days on a life raft off the US coast in 1982 without food or water, and Steven Callahan, who survived 76 days on a life raft in the Atlantic Ocean in 1982 after his sailboat sank.

### **Sample Summary:**

In January 1990, eighteen-year-old Lotty Stevens survived an extraordinary ordeal after a storm capsized his boat during a fishing trip near Vanuatu. Alone and adrift in the ocean for twenty-one days, Lotty initially clung to the wreckage and then swam toward what he hoped was land, surviving on hope and prayer. His miracle came in the form of a massive stingray that lifted him from the water and carried him for several days, even protecting him from attacking sharks. Eventually, the stingray brought him near shore, where he staggered onto a beach and was rescued by a fisherman. Lotty was later reunited with his family, who had already held a funeral for him, and all saw his survival as nothing short of miraculous.