

Zanele Situ

My story

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Zanele Situ: My story

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with the help of the Book Dash participants in Cape Town

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Zanele Situ

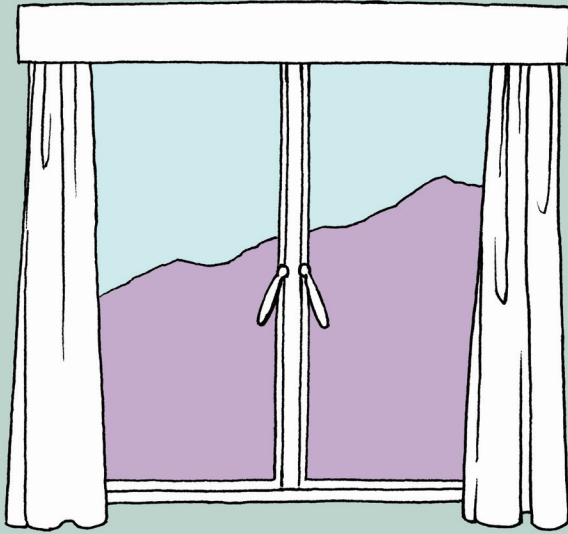
My story

Liz Sparg
Jesse Breytenbach
Andy Thesen

A stylized illustration of a mountain range. The mountains are depicted with a jagged black outline and a solid purple fill. The sky above the mountains is a solid light blue. The foreground is a solid green area, representing grass or a field. The overall style is simple and graphic.

I was born in summer, in a town called Matatiele in the Eastern Cape. Matatiele is near Lesotho where there are many mountains. In the winter they are covered with snow.

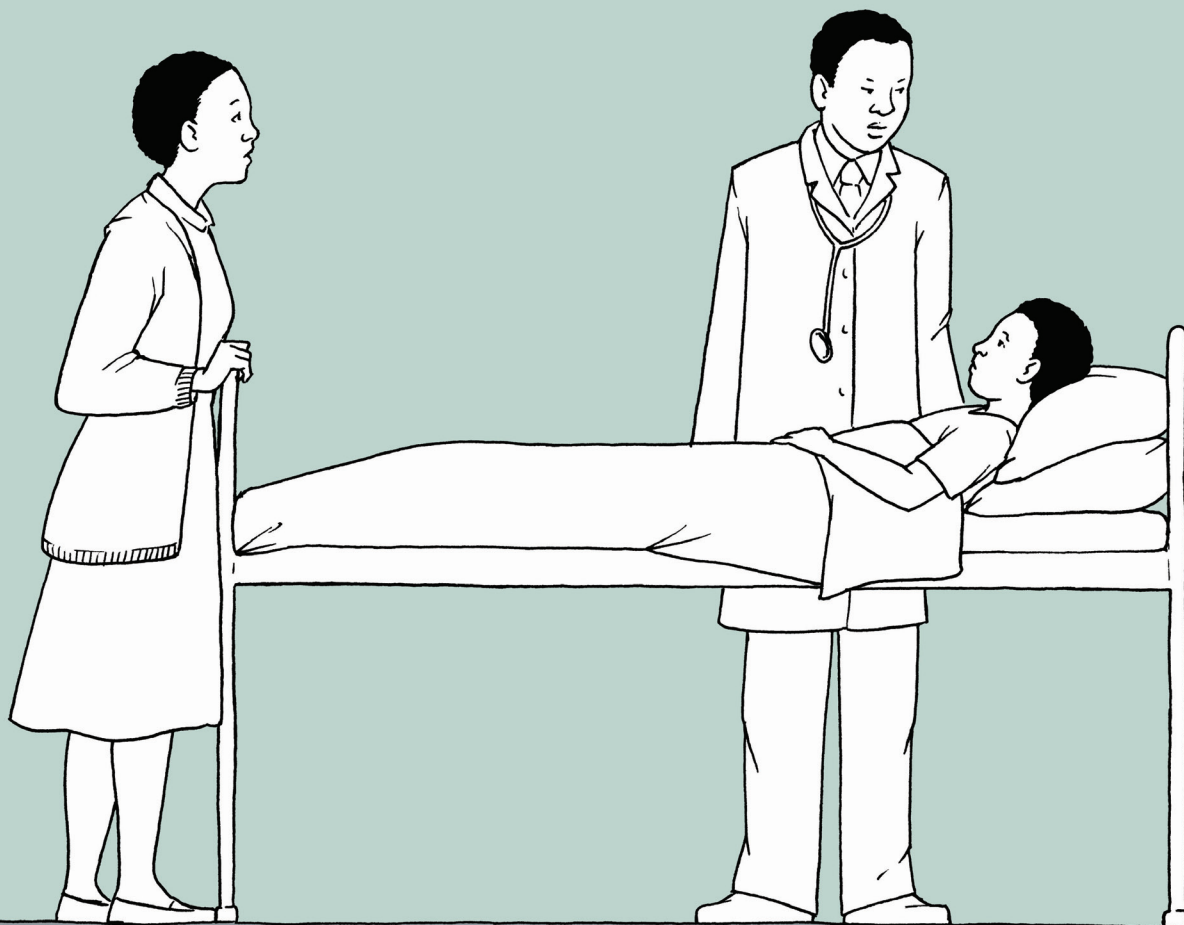




My father was a builder and he moved from place to place to find work. We moved to Lesotho and that's where I started school. I was very happy. But when I was eleven years old, I grew tired and weak, and then I couldn't walk. My parents took me to the hospital.

What is wrong,
doctor?

I don't know. We
must do some special
tests to find out.

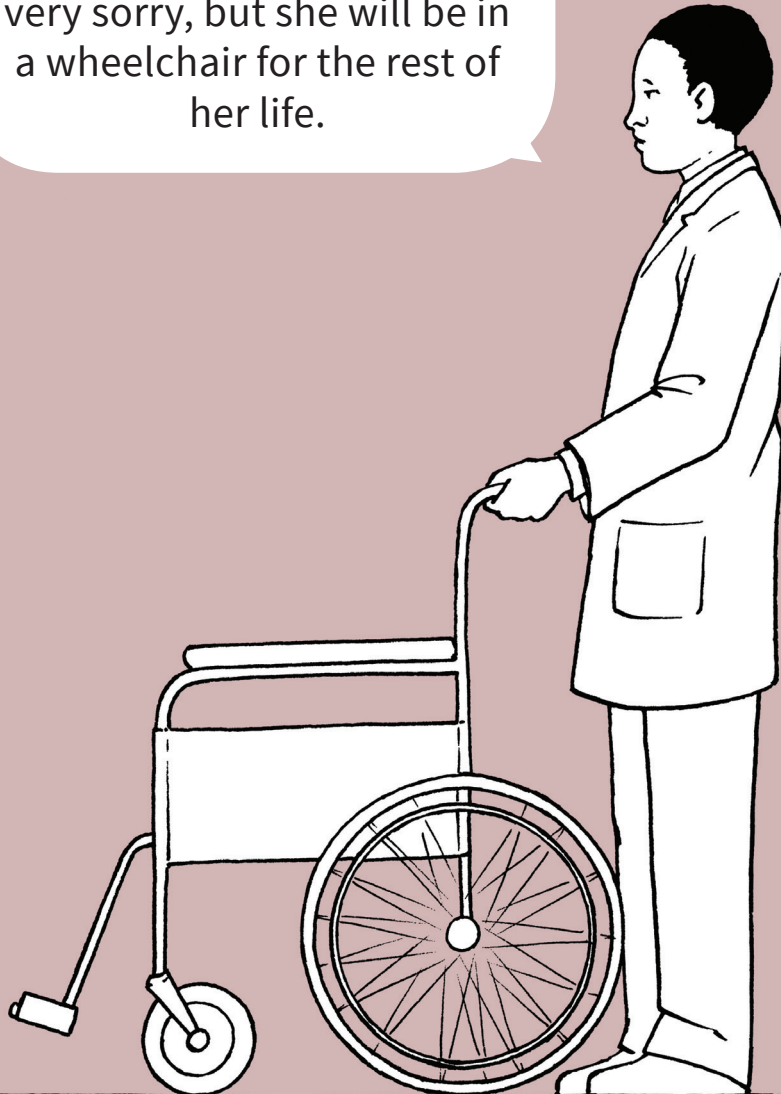


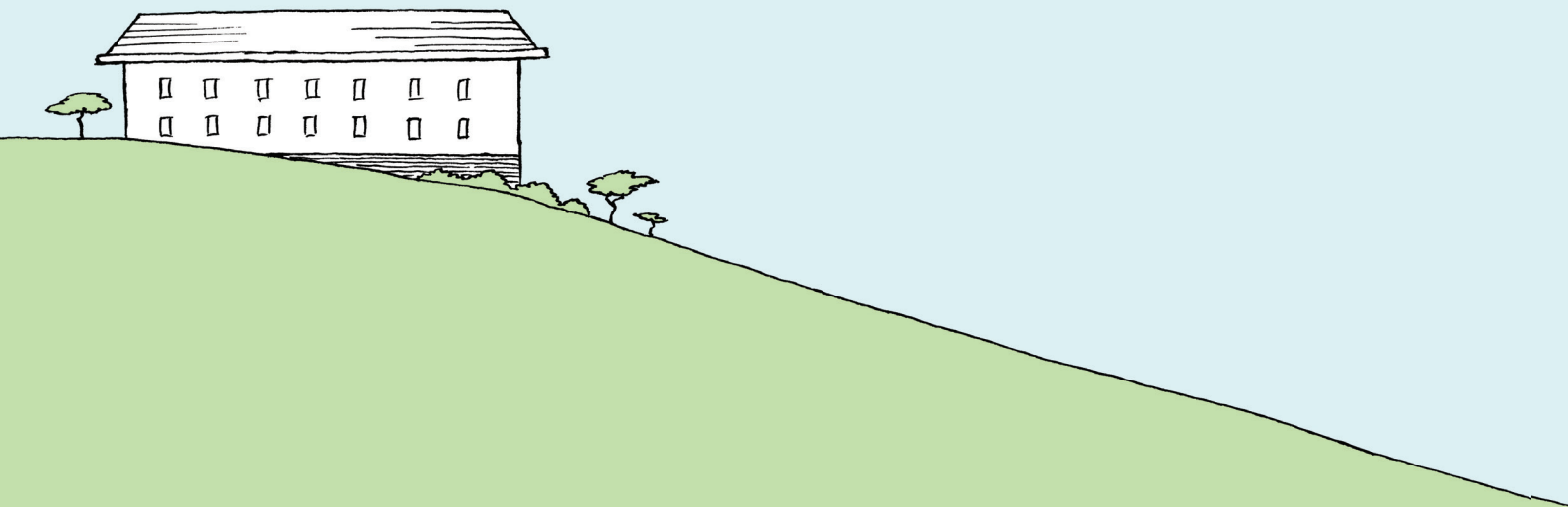
I had to stay in hospital for three years.
I was very tired and I slept many hours
every day. After three years the doctors
told me I would not be able to walk again.

I was very sad because I love sports.



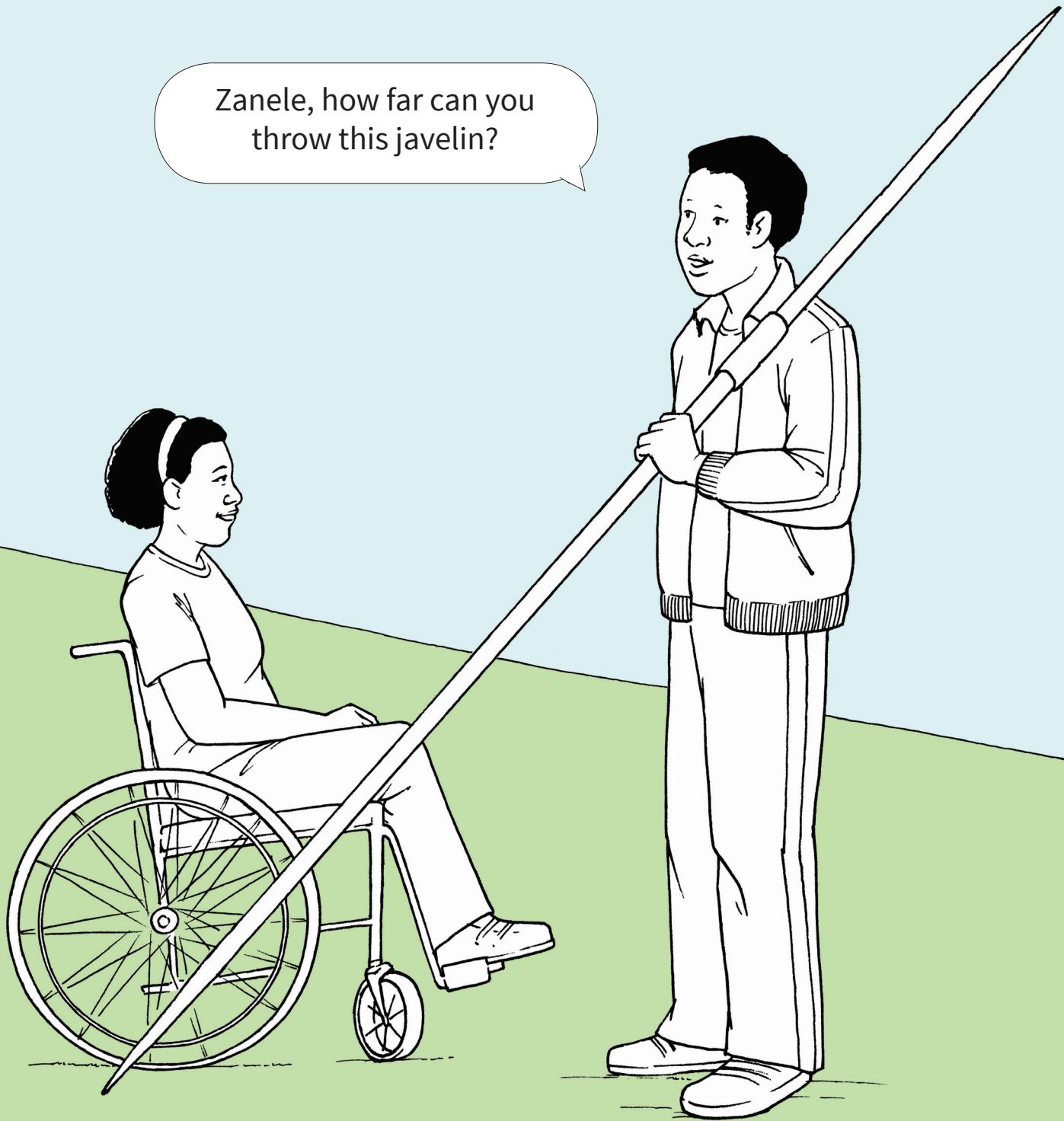
We think Zanele has got TB in her spine. It has attacked her nerves. I am very sorry, but she will be in a wheelchair for the rest of her life.

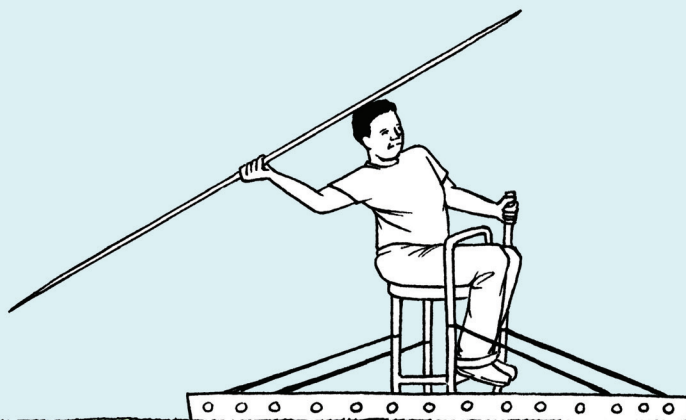
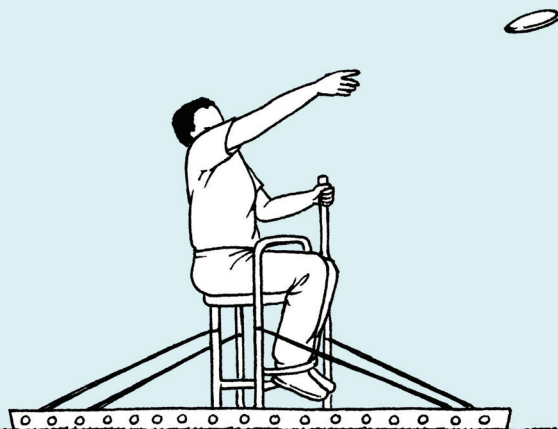
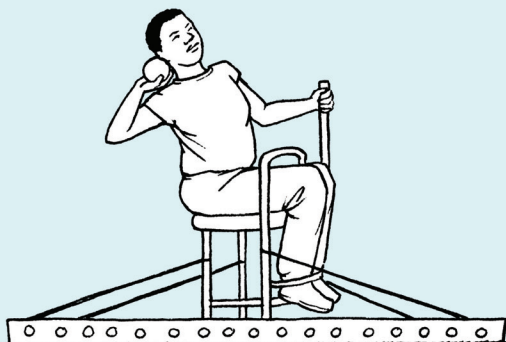




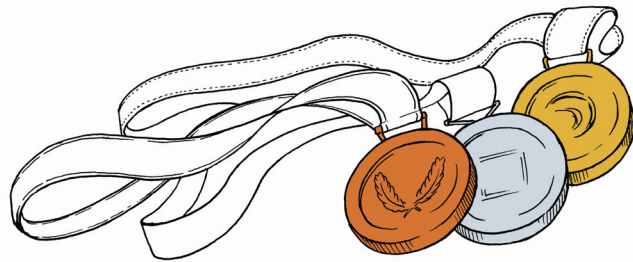
I went to a special school in Umtata, and my teachers encouraged me. It was a very busy school, with lots of activities like sport and sewing. On weekends we had tasks to do. We had to clean our rooms, polish our shoes and clean our wheelchairs.

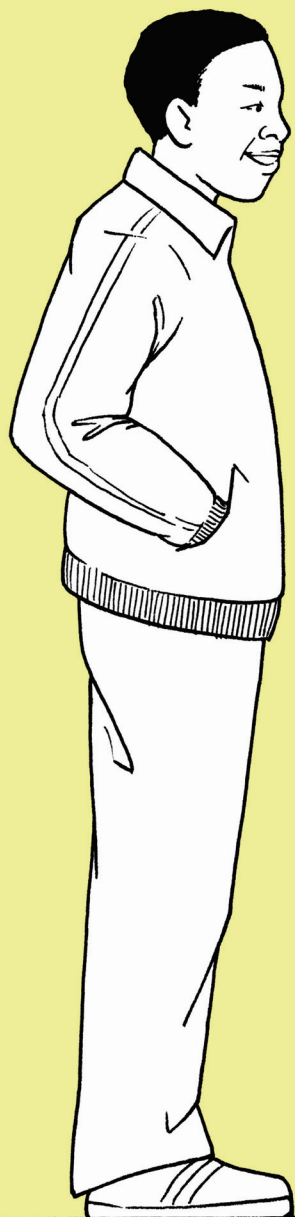
Zanele, how far can you
throw this javelin?



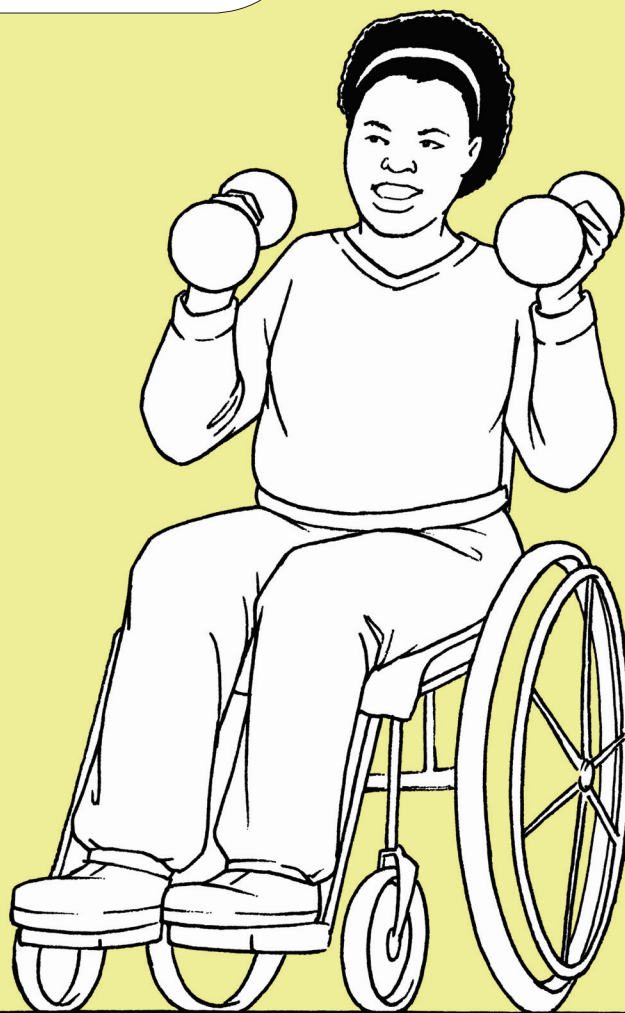


I decided to keep trying, and never give up. If you have a disability, you can still do something you love. I love to see how far I can go, so I entered a competition. I won a bronze medal for shot putt, a silver medal for discus and a gold medal for javelin.





Well done, Zanele – you
are really improving!



I wanted to get better and better at my
sports, so I trained very hard.

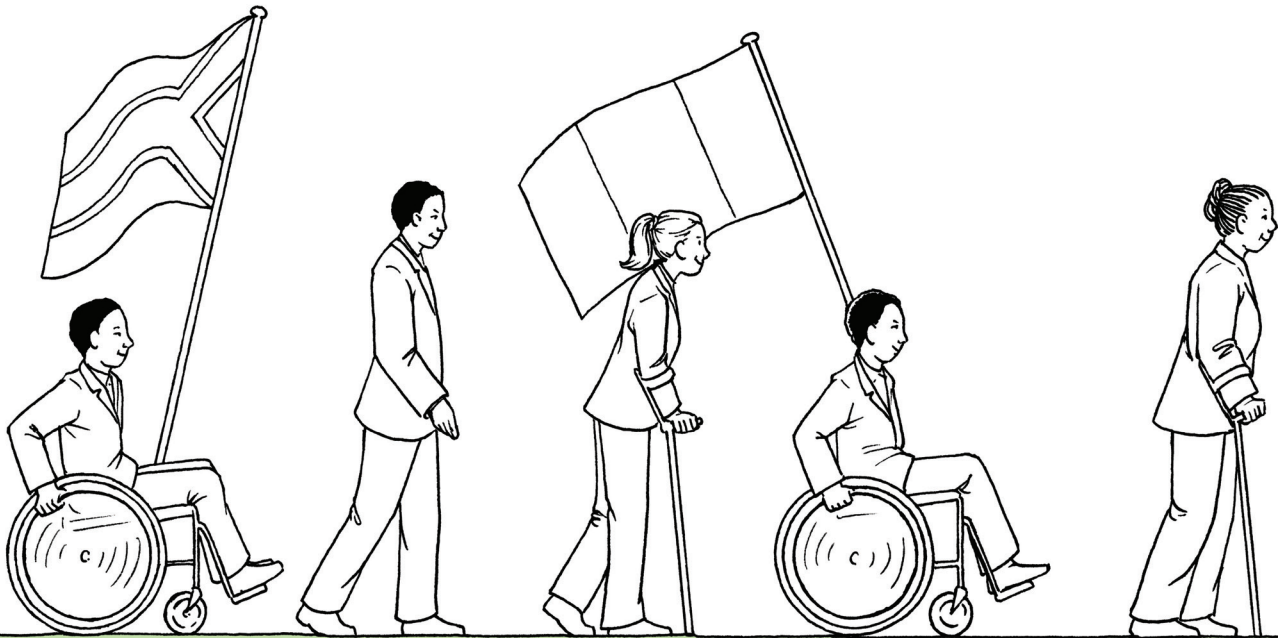


When I rested, I loved to sew and listen to gospel music.

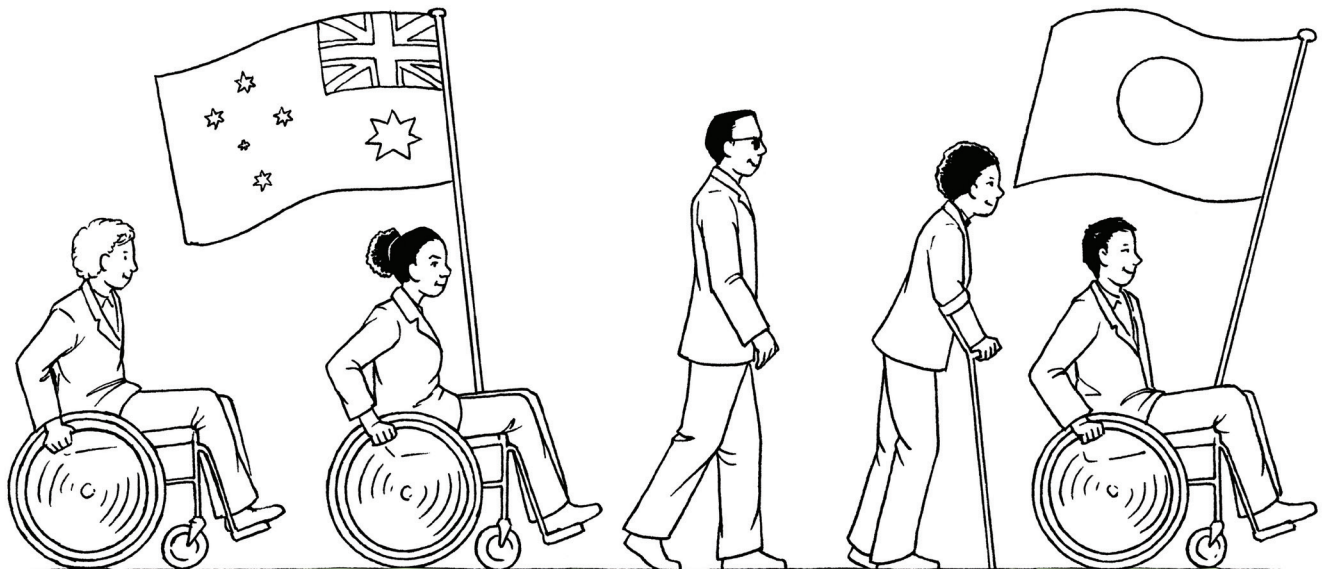
I entered more competitions and I got many medals and prizes. I started to dream about maybe competing in the Paralympics one day.



The Paralympics are just like the Olympics, where the best athletes in the world compete for gold, silver and bronze medals.



But in the Paralympics, the athletes are disabled in different ways, so they have to try even harder to train and win!



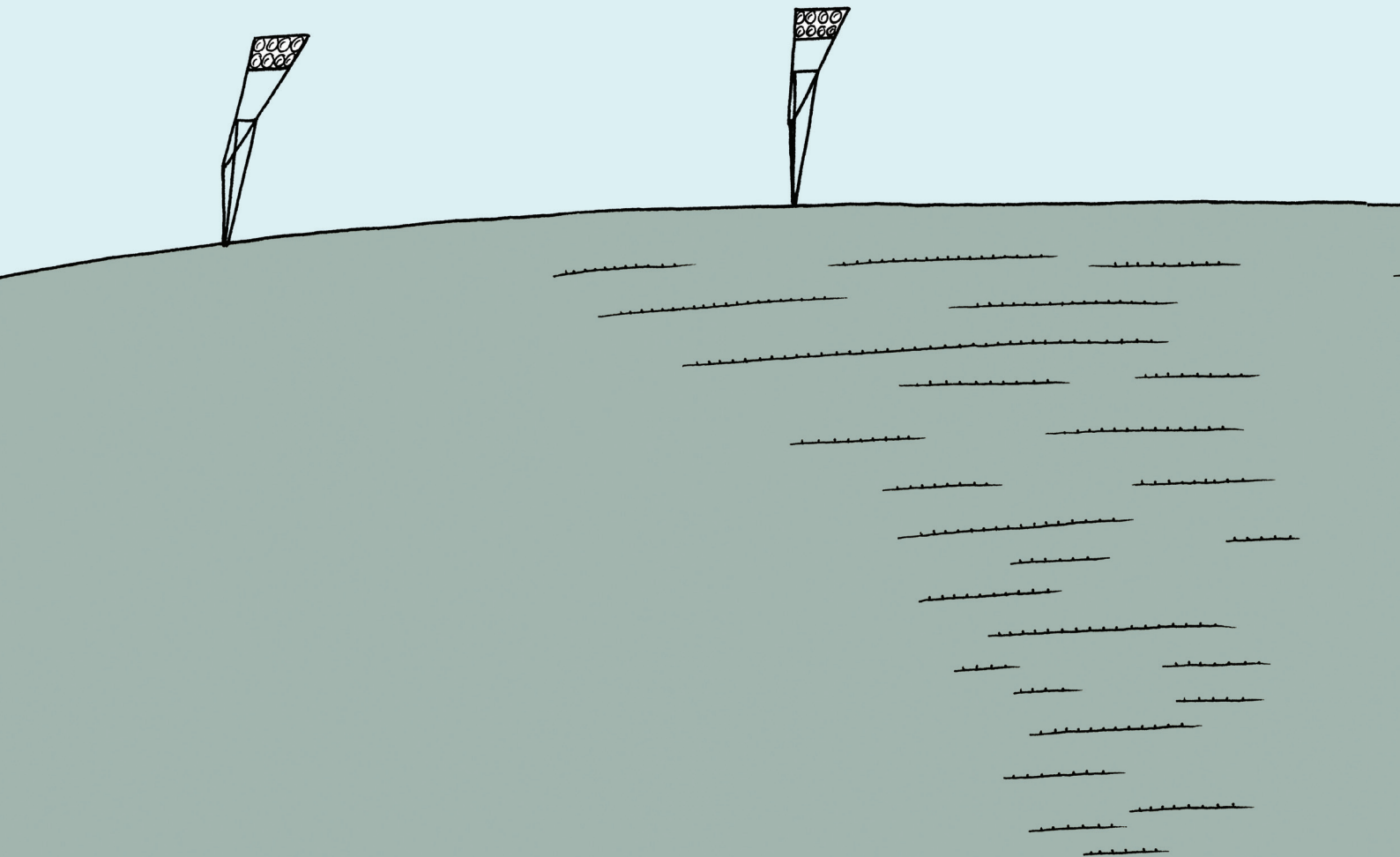
Then I heard that I was going to Sydney
in Australia, to take part in the 2000
Paralympics. At last we were in the plane,
flying over the Indian Ocean!



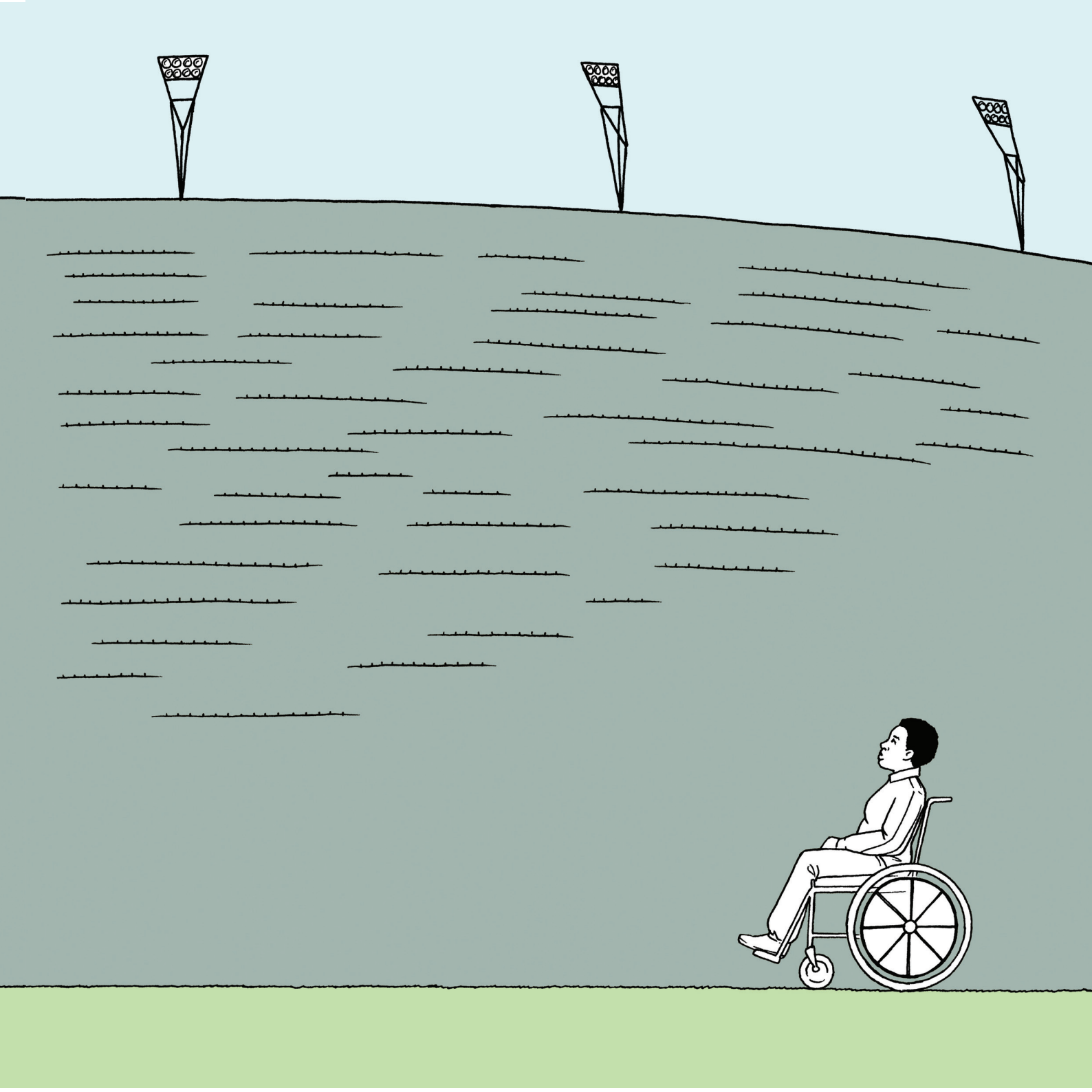


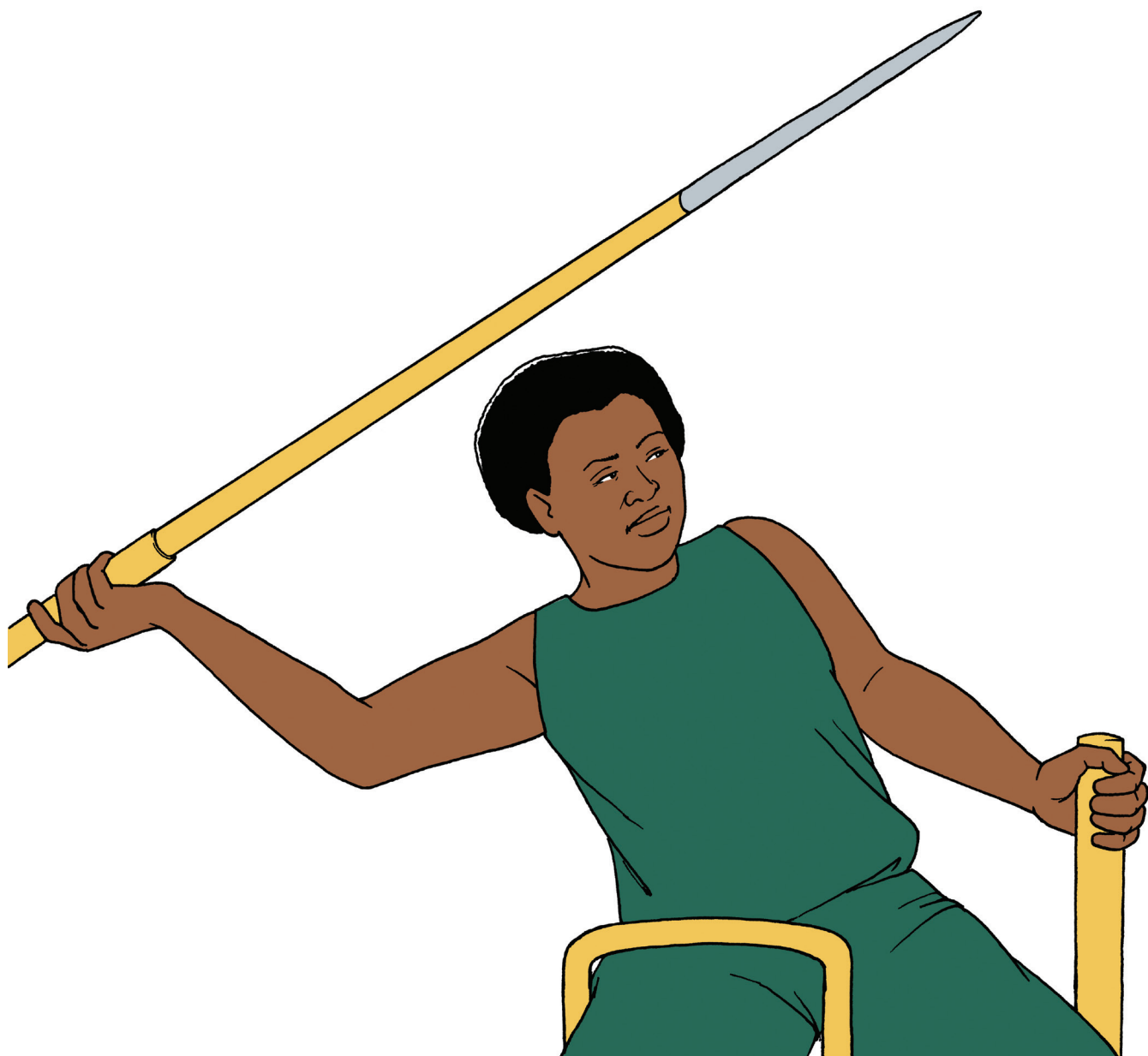
A man and a woman are seated in airplane seats, facing each other. The man, on the left, is wearing glasses and a white shirt. The woman, on the right, is wearing a white shirt and has her hands clasped. Both are looking out of their respective airplane windows. The windows show a landscape with purple mountains and a blue sky. A thought bubble above the woman's head contains the text "I am so excited!".

I
am so
excited!



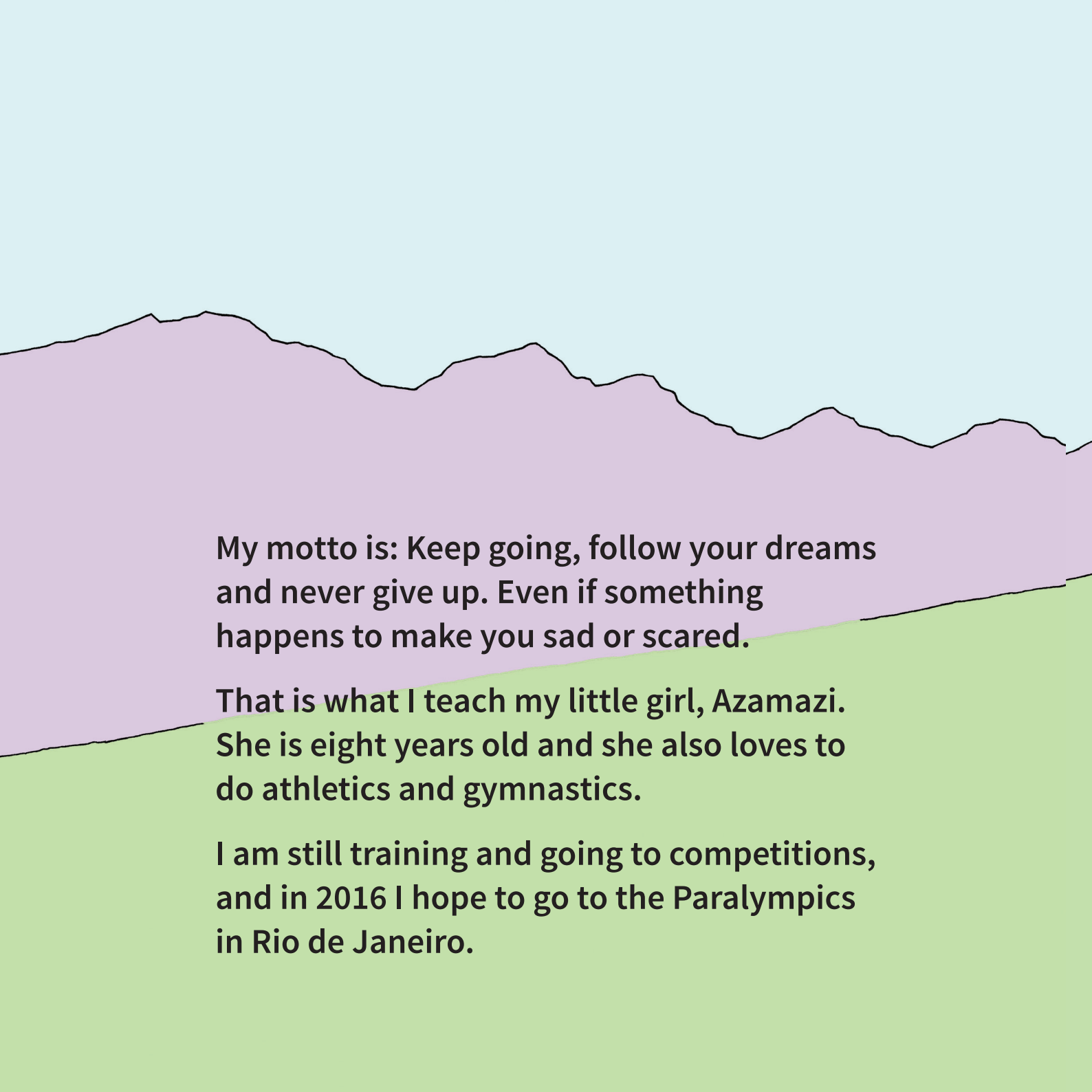
But when I got there, I suddenly felt very
scared of all the people watching me. I
just wanted to go home again.





Then, when I threw my javelin it landed far in front of everyone's. I broke the world record and I got a gold medal! I was the first African woman to win a gold medal in the Paralympics. I was so happy and very proud.





My motto is: Keep going, follow your dreams
and never give up. Even if something
happens to make you sad or scared.

That is what I teach my little girl, Azamazi.
She is eight years old and she also loves to
do athletics and gymnastics.

I am still training and going to competitions,
and in 2016 I hope to go to the Paralympics
in Rio de Janeiro.





