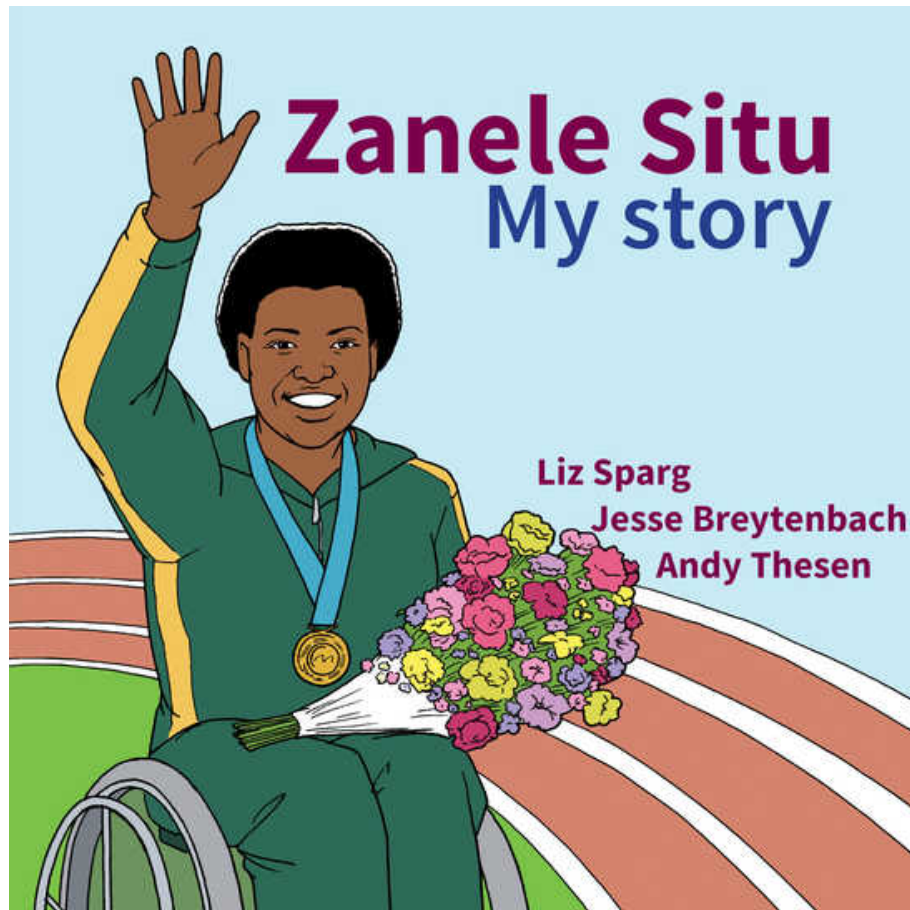


Zanele Situ: My Story

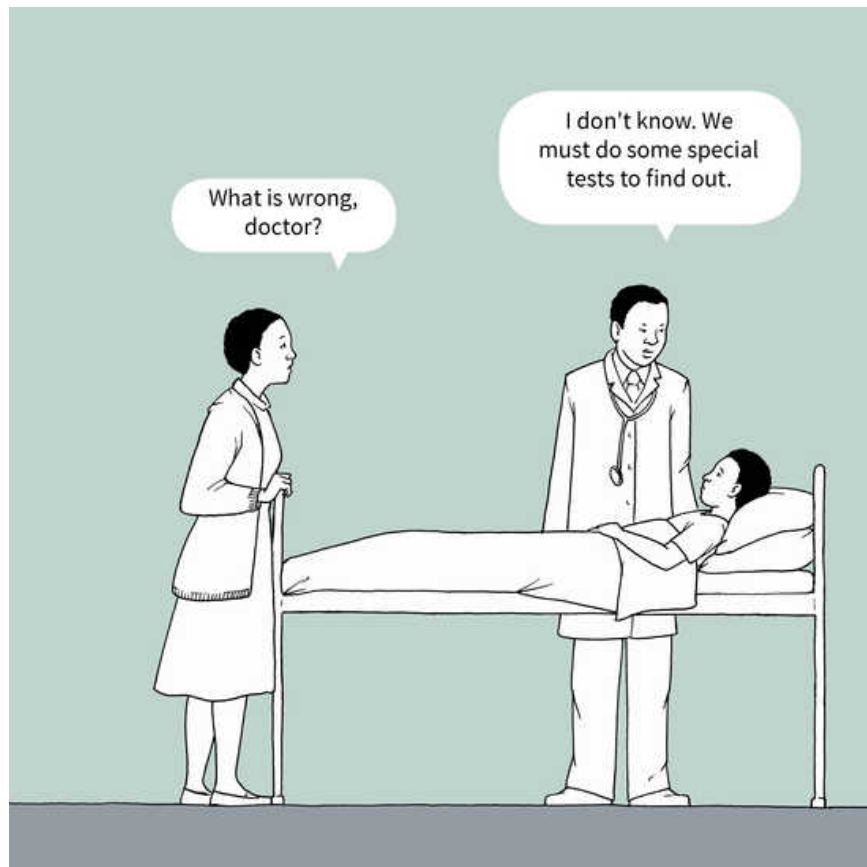
Liz Sparg
English

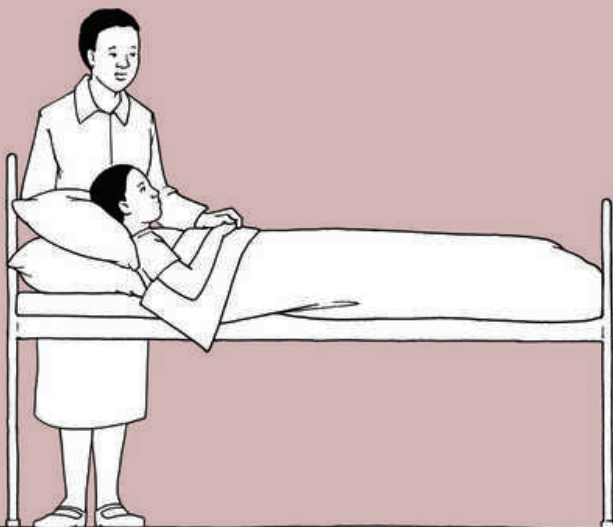




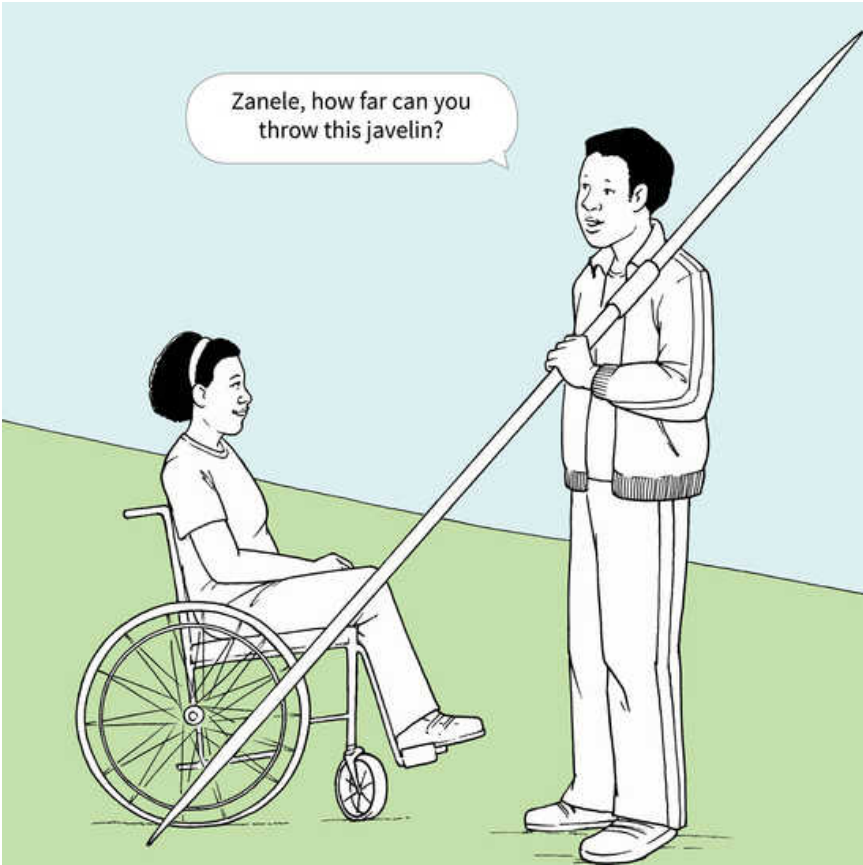
I was born in summer, in a town called Matatiele in the Eastern Cape. Matatiele is near Lesotho where there are many mountains. In the winter they are covered with snow.

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.



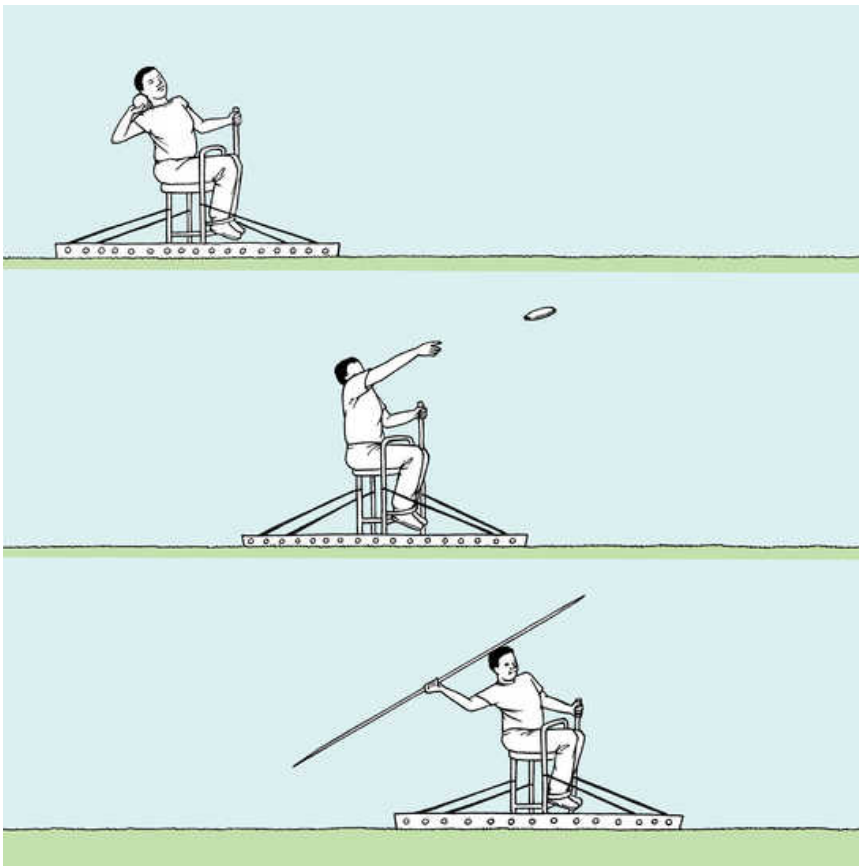


I had to stay in hospital for three years. I was very tired and I slept many hours every day. After three years the doctors told me I would not be able to walk again. I was very sad because I love sports.

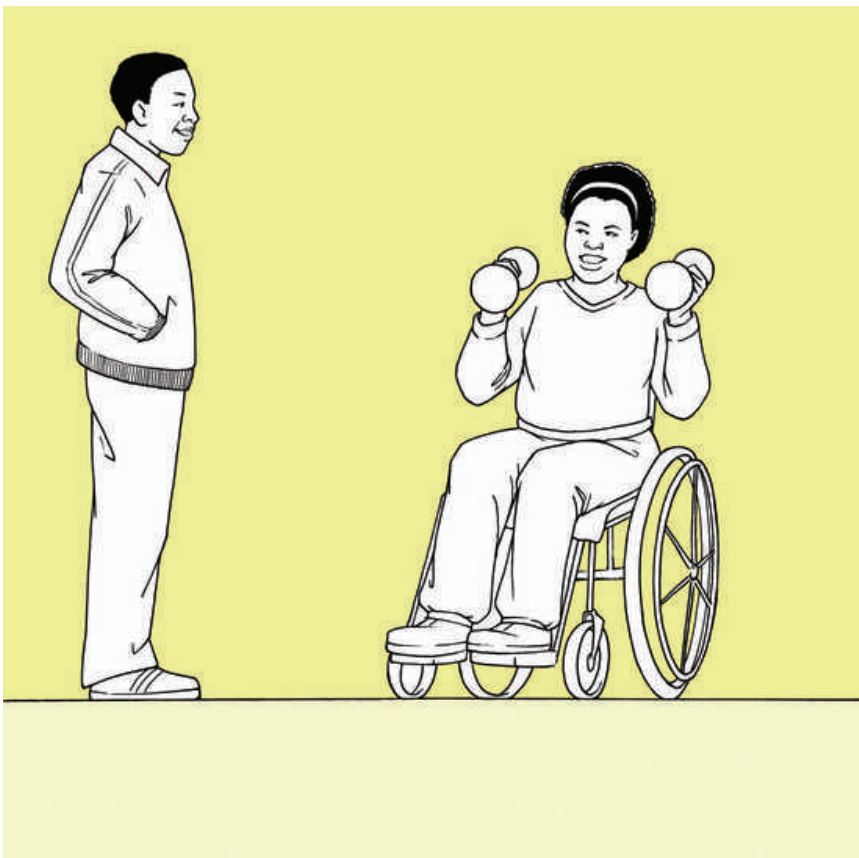


Zanele, how far can you throw this javelin?

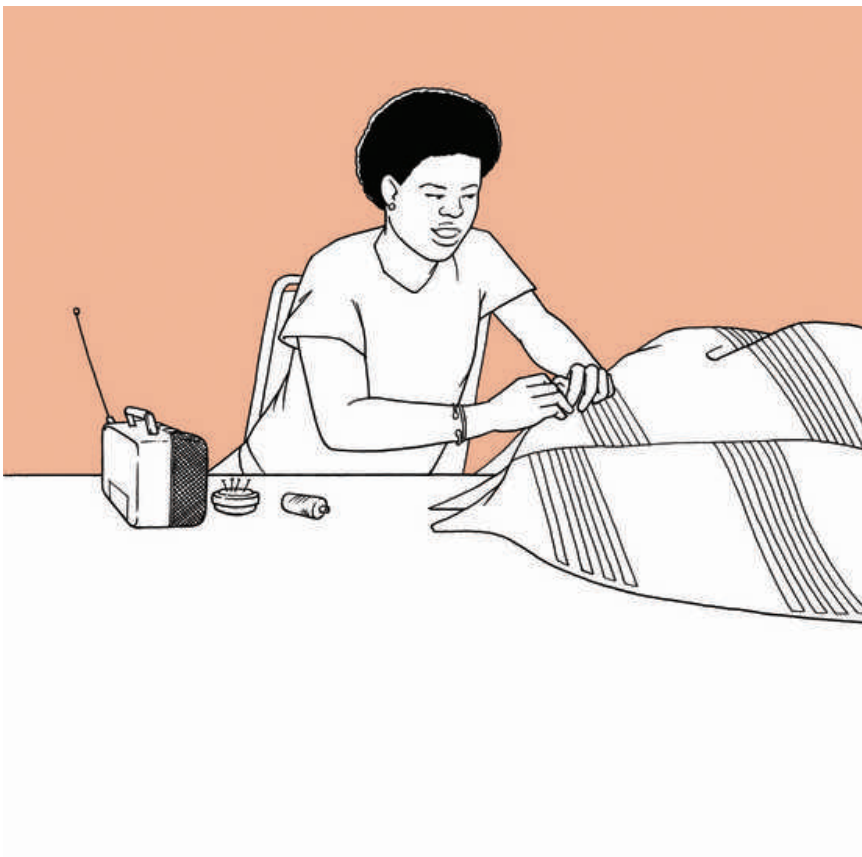
I went to a special school in Umtata, and my teachers encouraged me. It was a very busy school, with lots of activities like sport and sewing. On weekends we had tasks to do. We had to clean our rooms, polish our shoes and clean our wheelchairs.



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.



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.

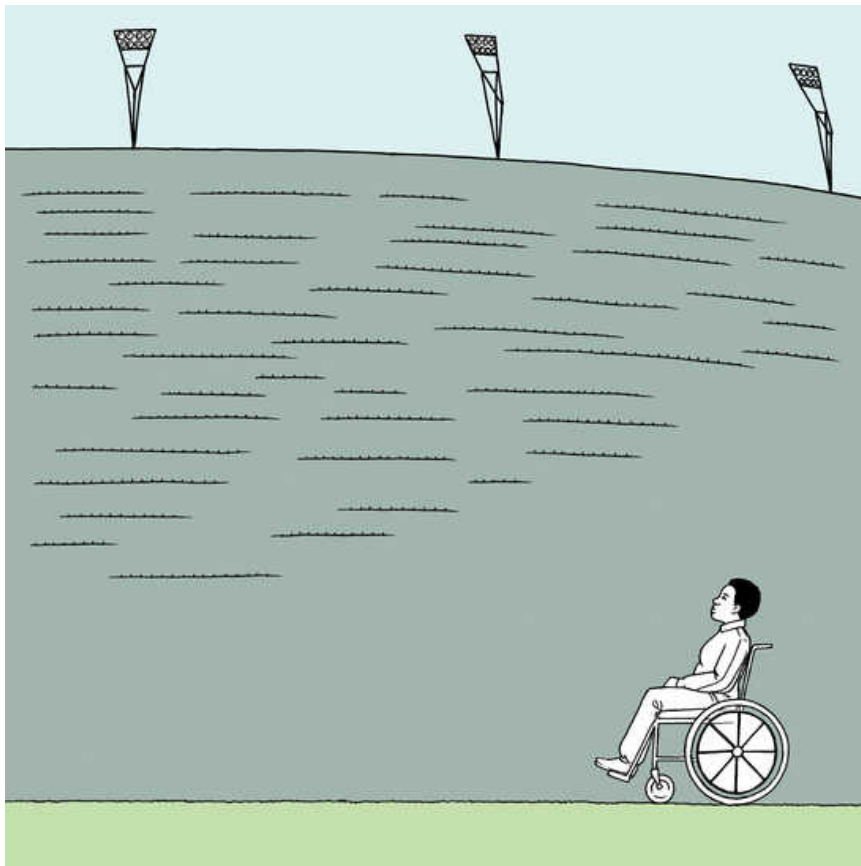
The Paralympics are just like the Olympics, where the best athletes in the world compete for gold, silver and bronze medals.

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!



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.

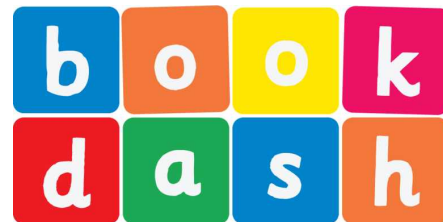
I am still training and going to competitions, and in 2016 I hope to go to the Paralympics in Rio de Janeiro.

Zanele Situ: My Story

Writer: Liz Sparg

Illustration: Jesse Breytenbach and Graham Paterson

Language: English



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