



YUSRA MARDINI :
SWIMMING TOWARDS
A BRIGHT FUTURE

PREFACE

This book is based on a presentation we had to do in English class about a success story. We first thought of doing it on Elon Musk but immediately changed our minds when the movie Swimmer was released on Netflix.

Have you ever had those moments in your life when you know for sure that this was the right choice ? Well Yusra Mardini's story was THE right choice. Not only is it unique, but it is also extremely inspriring.

This short book is not enough to cover all of this young woman's hardships, but we sincerely hope that you enjoy this light read and your journey here at Vélizy.

This is the story of a girl who dreamed of swimming in the Olympics, a teen who fled her war torn country for her dream and a woman who swam in the Olympics not for herself, but for millions of people.

This the story of Yusra Mardini:

Swimming towards her dream

CHAPTER I : ONCE UPON A TIME, IN SYRIA

Once upon a time in a suburb of Damascus, a young girl lived happily with her parents and two sisters. She would spend hours in the swimming pool training with her older sister almost every day. Why? Because she had a dream that most would deem impossible: Swim in the Olympics and win.

Swimming since she was 3, Yusra took her training very seriously and even went on to represent her country in the FINA World Swimming Championship.

All was going well for the young Syrian girl, and if nothing happened, Yusra had high hopes for her future.

Unfortunately, war happened.

In 2011, the civil war ruined the previously happy and colourful country of Syria.

Random military checks, constant shoot outs, Yusra tried to keep living a normal life over the years, going to parties with her sister and training with her dad on a daily basis as if the war was just a bad dream that would eventually go away.

But it didn't... And the situation was getting worse and worse.

Some swimming pools got caught up in the crossfire, Yusra even trained in pools with collapsed roofs due to bombs.

One day, while she was training, a missile suddenly landed in front of her. And that's when she thought "I'm a swimmer, but what if I die in the water?".

Fortunately, the missile didn't activate. But at that moment, Yusra felt like her dreams were getting further and further away from her and that she would never get to be an olympic swimmer.

However, as if that wasn't enough, her house was destroyed in 2015 prompting her and her sister to flee their war torn country for Europe in hopes of getting a visa and allowing their parents and little sister to join them to safety through the family reunion program.

CHAPTER II : SWIM TOWARDS FREEDOM

August 2015, it's with tears that Yusra and Sara decide to leave Demascus and their family.

They reach Lebanon, and then Turkey, where they were arranged to be smuggled into Greece.

In 2015, the two teenagers started the most stressful part of their journey in a dingi, a small boat, along with 18 other refugees, most of whom didn't know how to swim. The two sisters scooted close to each other, getting as much comfort and warmth as they could while crossing the sea.

But as they were getting close to their destination, their boat's engine suddenly failed. The sisters looked at their fellow refugees who started panicking, because they didn't know how to swim. Yusra clenched her fists and was about to jump in when Sara stopped her. The two stared at each other for what seemed like eternity. Should they jump and push the boat just by themselves and risk their lives or stay still, hoping for help?

Seeing the boat start to take on water and sink, the two gritted their teeth and jumped out of the boat along three other refugees.

The sisters swam and swam for hours on end across the Aeagan sea, pushing and pulling the boat, not knowing if they could make it to the coast before it fully sank.

But it didn't... And the situation was getting worse and worse.

Thankfully after what seemed like an eternity, they arrived on land.

Unfortunately, it wasn't the end of their struggle.

On land, they were treated as if they were criminals, as if they had no home, as if they don't belong anywhere... outcasts, that's what they were. It was extremely hard for a young girl not to feel aggrieved in this situation, especially after such a long and hard trip. But Yusra kept going on, her dream of becoming an olympian pushing her forward, the company of her sister reassuring her that she wasn't alone and that she had someone to keep her steady on her path.

CHAPTER III : NEW LAND, NEW OPPORTUNITIES

After making the month-long journey with her sister going from Damascus and passing through Europe, they arrived in Germany where Yusra joined a swimming club in Berlin.

That's where she heard about the IOC Refugee Olympic Team, a team made of people who fled their homeland because of war who also wanted to compete.

The young woman couldn't believe it ! Her dream was still possible ! Even if she was in a foreign country, even as a refugee, she could still swim in the Olympics !

Yusra tried to join the team, but didn't get accepted straight away and had to take many tryouts. But ultimately, through sheer efforts and talent, she earned her spot, managed to get along with her teammates and was closer than ever to the dream she's been fighting for all this time.

CHAPTER IV : SWIMMING TOWARDS A BRIGHT FUTURE

5 August 2016, Yusra looked at her teammates, their eyes closed thinking about how far they've come. She clenched her fists and smiled while facing the closed door in front of her.

The Olympics ... she was finally here !

The staff member opened the door after getting the signal. The team members looked at each other, took a collective deep breath before stepping forward. Just a few steps in and all of them froze.

Yusra looked at the fireworks, the audience, her coach, her older sister; she thought about all the refugees in the world, about her family watching on tv: her mother probably shedding tears of joy, her father clenching his fists in pure excitement and nervousness and of course her little sister Shad, screaming and jumping around the room cheering for her.

That was when she realized: that it wasn't about her dream, that it wasn't only about her anymore, it was about millions of people. She was now representing people who need the hope, people who need to hear her voice and give them strength to overcome their hardships to reach their goals just like she did.

Throughout the whole competition, as she was moving her arms, pushing against the water, racing against others, she constantly thought about other refugees, about how hard their lives were, about the people back home living in fear of not seeing the next sunrise... She wanted to swim for them, show her people that this ordinary Syrian girl is right here and is changing the world.

And that's exactly what she did, getting first place in her first race, the women's 100m butterfly heat and inspiring millions.

THE END

AFTERTHOUGHTS

After the 2016 Olympics, Yusra went on to swim in the Olympics of 2020, inspiring even more people. She even wrote a book about her life, but if you're not a book person like waree , you can watch the movie Swimmers on Netflix based on her story. The movie has been a huge hit for a while and we really appreciated it.

And what really marked us it that this story is not only about Yusra's journey, it's about the thousands and millions of refugees around the world.

The film director tried to be as transparent as possible, inviting real refugees who already went through this trip to participate in the movie and make it as authentic as possible showing us how hard it is for them and changing their image for some.

That they're not people coming here to beg for help because they couldn't succeed in their country, that they belong nowhere. In fact they do have a home, they do have successful careers, it's just the circumstances that took away everything they had and pushed them towards us asking for help.