



**Lina Khalifeh**  
by Karen Keyrouz

**Safiya Al Bahlani**  
by Raphaëlle Macaron

**Muna Harib**  
by Zeina Bassil

# WOMEN OF CHANGE

*A collection of real women's inspiring life stories.*

"There is still, around the world and in this region, a deeply rooted belief that men are the only ones in charge of society's big changes. The truth is, however, that off the radar and away from the media spotlight, millions of women are relentlessly improving life within their communities. No matter how big or small their projects may be, they are always inspiring, effective, and grounded in moral and ethical values. It's great that this work is starting to get them noticed." **Alex Brunori - Creative Lead, Google MENA**



## Who are the **#WomenOfChange?**

While political and social changes of the recent decade have laid a solid foundation for women's rights groups in the Middle East, this progressive movement still lacks the necessary drive and initiative to encourage true significant change within the region.

In 2004, the **Maggi Diaries** episodes brought new light to the struggle for equal rights in the Middle East. Launching on the **MBC network**, the Maggi Diaries series established a platform to inspire, empower, and encourage women from across the region to push for social change.

Since the dawn of the Maggi Diaries episodes, more and more women have emerged from the shadows to join the collective voice that calls out for equality. As we look to the future, three women make a stand as the modern day heroines of this movement.

They are **powerful**.  
They are an **inspiration**.  
They are **#WomenOfChange**.

These are their stories.

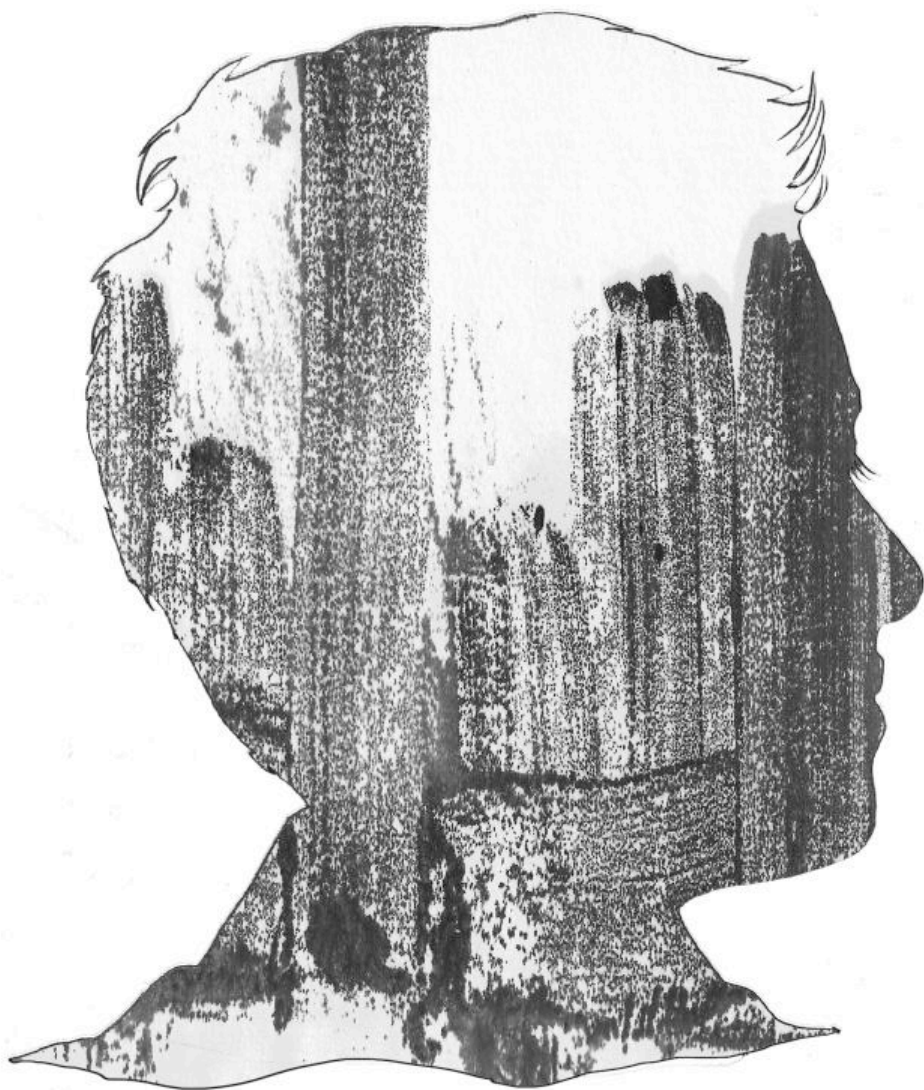
# The Shefighter

Lina's struggle for equal rights  
was getting her nowhere.  
She knew she had to fight.



Illustrated by  
**Karen Keyrouz**

“I WOULD LIKE TO SEE  
WOMEN TAKING CHARGE OF THEIR  
OWN LIVES AND DECISIONS.”



THE STORY OF LINA KHALIFEH IS NOT A FAR CRY FROM MANY YOUNG GIRLS; NOT JUST IN JORDAN,



BUT ACROSS



THE ENTIRE



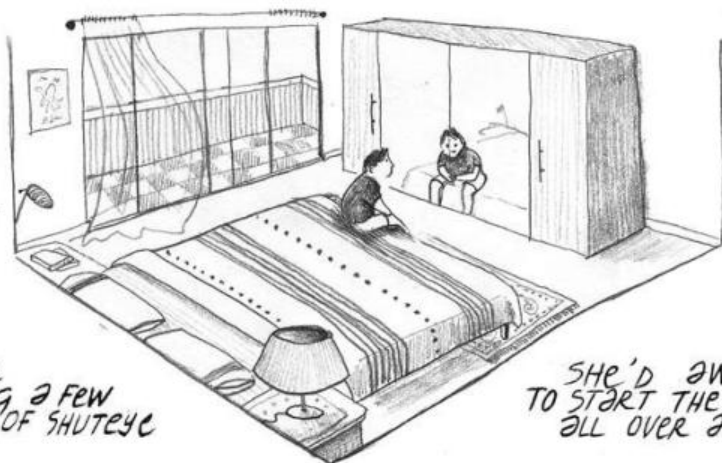
GLOBE.



AN ENTHUSIASTIC, SPRITELY YOUNG GIRL LIVING IN THE CITY OF AMMAN, LINA LIVED A PRETTY ORDINARY LIFE FOR THE TIME, FOCUSING ON HER STUDIES THROUGHOUT THE DAY,



LINA WOULD SPEND HER EVENINGS  
PLAYING SPORTS IN THE STREETS  
WITH THE LOCAL BOYS.

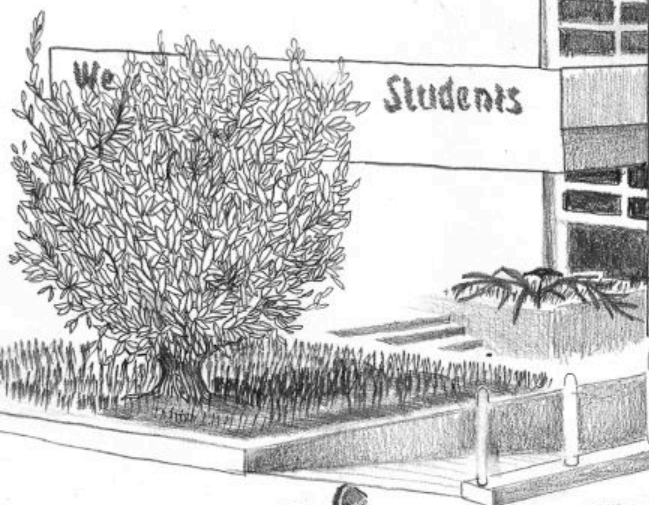


AFTER  
CATCHING A FEW  
WINKS OF SHUT EYE

SHE'D AWAKE  
TO START THE DAY  
ALL OVER AGAIN.



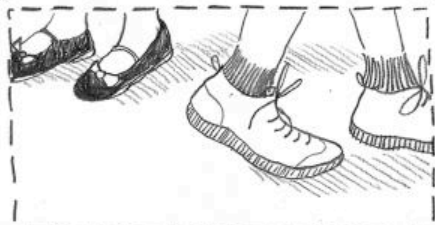
ENROLLED IN AN ALL GIRLS SCHOOL FROM  
A VERY YOUNG AGE, LINA WAS HAUNTED  
BY THE OVERBEARING FEELING  
OF DIFFERENCE.



SHE JUST WASN'T  
LIKE THE OTHER  
GIRLS.

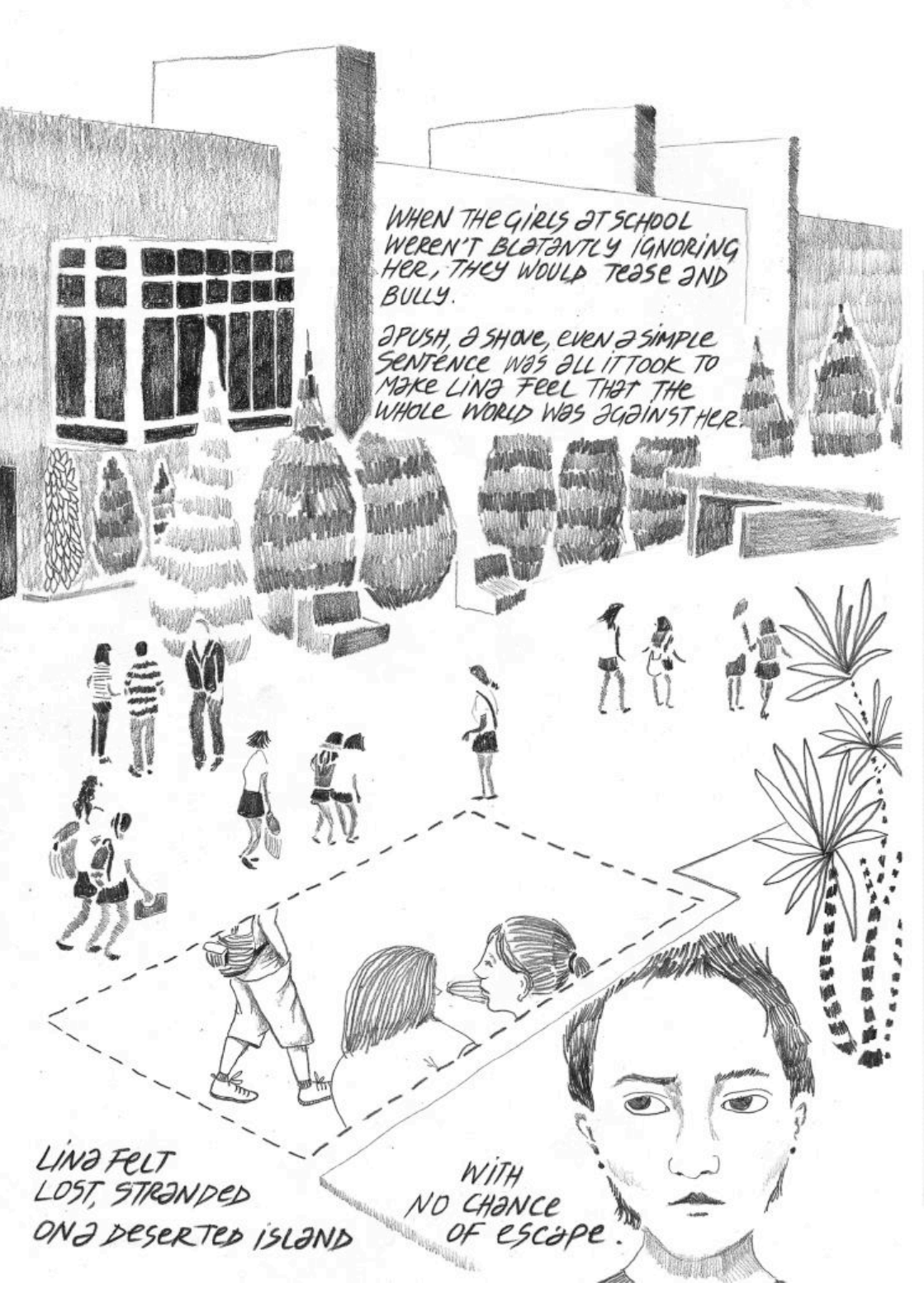


SHE SIMPLY DIDN'T FIT IN.



A SELF-PROCLAIMED TOMBOY,  
LINA OFTEN FELT ISOLATED FROM HER PEERS.





WHEN THE GIRLS AT SCHOOL  
WEREN'T BLATANTLY IGNORING  
HER, THEY WOULD TEASE AND  
BULLY.

A PUSH, A SHOVE, EVEN A SIMPLE  
SENTENCE WAS ALL IT TOOK TO  
MAKE LINA FEEL THAT THE  
WHOLE WORLD WAS AGAINST HER.

LINA FELT  
LOST, STRANDED  
ON A DESERTED ISLAND

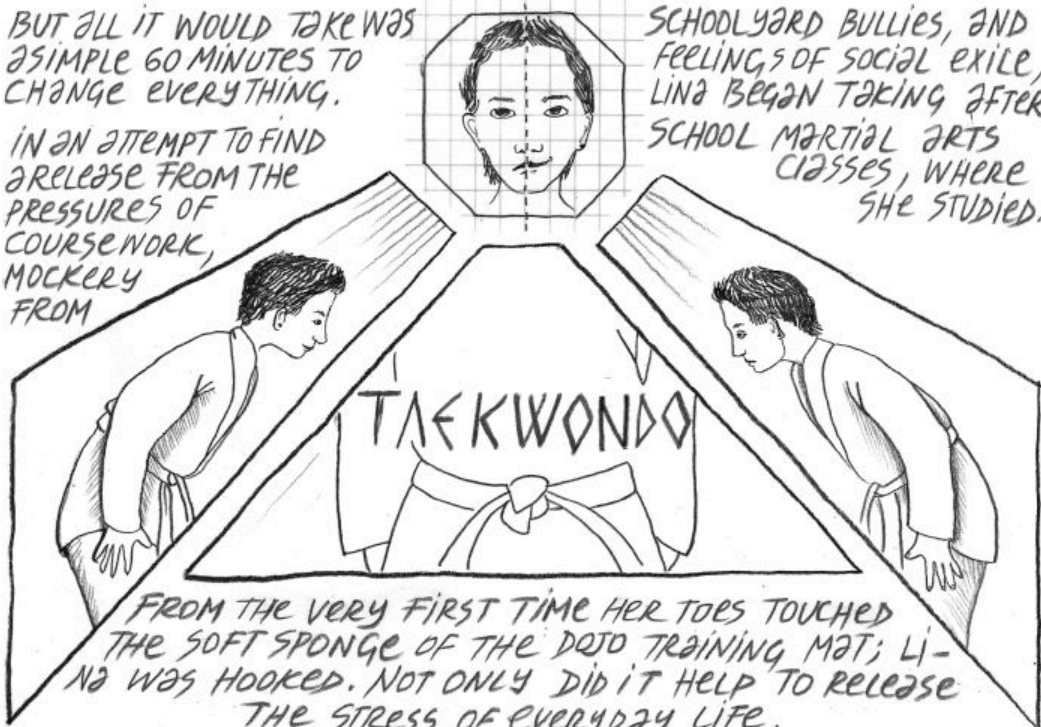
WITH  
NO CHANCE  
OF ESCAPE.



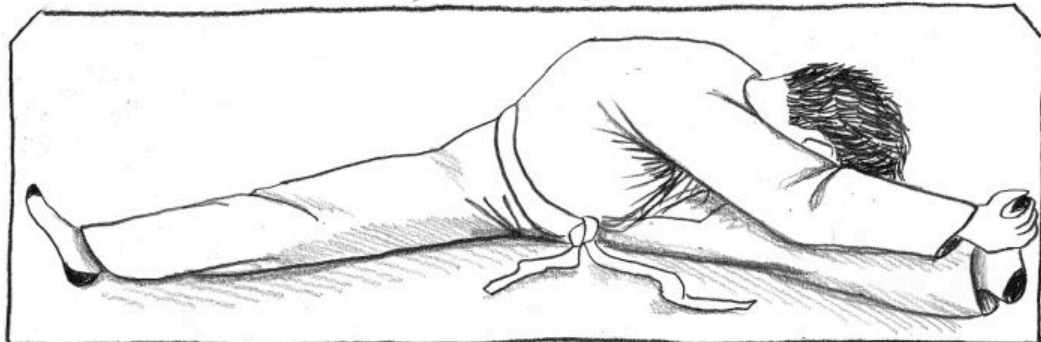
BUT ALL IT WOULD TAKE WAS  
A SIMPLE 60 MINUTES TO  
CHANGE EVERYTHING.

IN AN ATTEMPT TO FIND  
A RELEASE FROM THE  
PRESSURES OF  
COURSEWORK,  
MOCKERY  
FROM

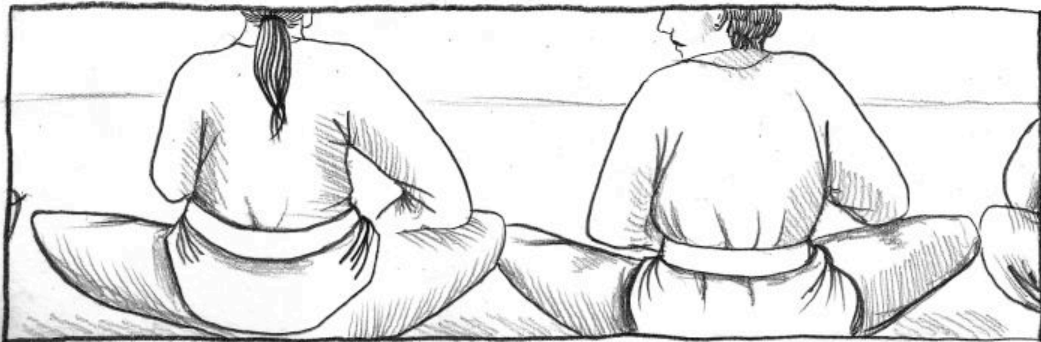
SCHOOLYARD BULLIES, AND  
FEELINGS OF SOCIAL EXILE,  
LINA BEGAN TAKING AFTER  
SCHOOL MARTIAL ARTS  
CLASSES, WHERE  
SHE STUDIED..



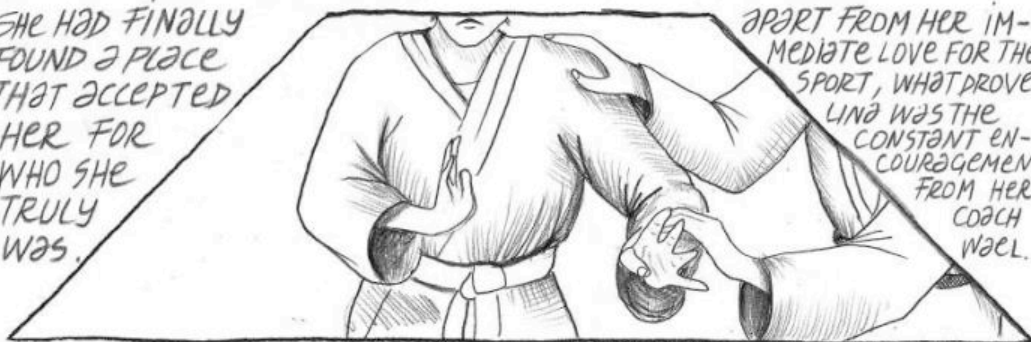
FROM THE VERY FIRST TIME HER TOES TOUCHED  
THE SOFT SPONGE OF THE DOJO TRAINING MAT; LI-  
NA WAS HOOKED. NOT ONLY DID IT HELP TO RELEASE  
THE STRESS OF EVERYDAY LIFE,



IT ALLOWED HER TO CONTROL HER POWER WITHIN, ENHANCE HER  
CONFIDENCE, AND ULTIMATELY, MAKE NEW FRIENDS.



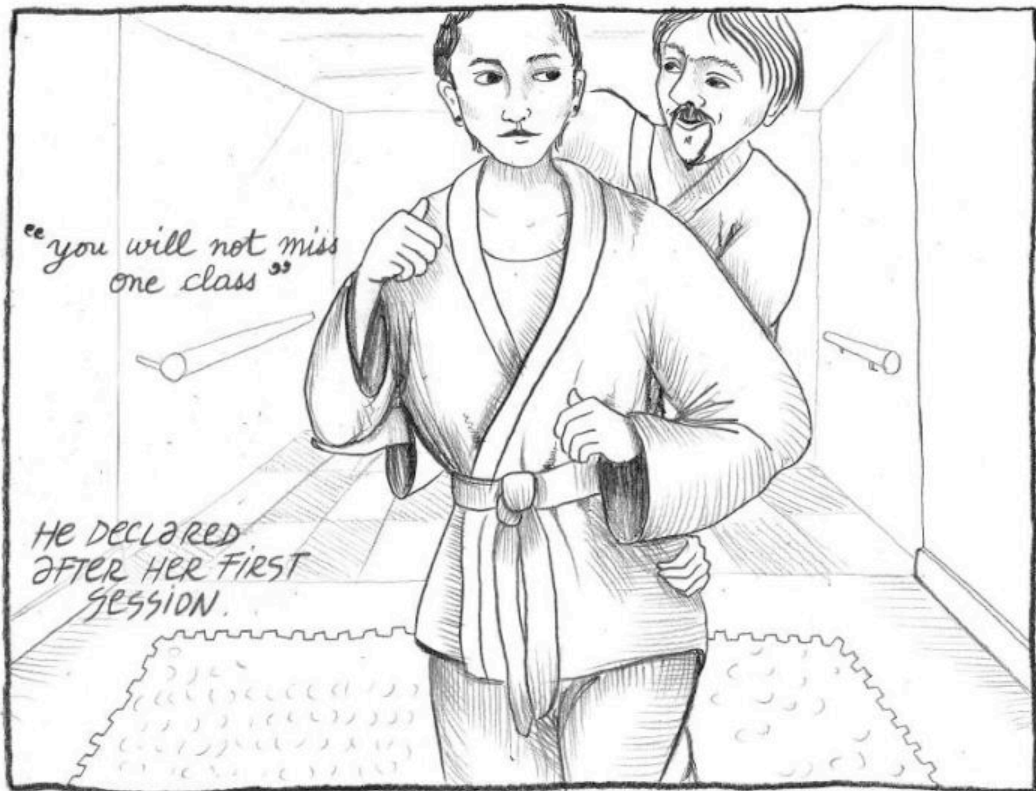
SHE HAD FINALLY  
FOUND A PLACE  
THAT ACCEPTED  
HER FOR  
WHO SHE  
TRULY  
WAS.



APART FROM HER IM-  
MEDIATE LOVE FOR THE  
SPORT, WHAT PROVE  
LINA WAS THE  
CONSTANT EN-  
COURAGEMENT  
FROM HER  
COACH  
WÆL.

"you will not miss  
one class"

HE DECLARED  
AFTER HER FIRST  
SESSION.



COACH  
WÆL  
ENCOUR-  
AGED  
LINA TO  
BEGIN SPAR-  
RING AT A  
COMPETITIVE  
LEVEL

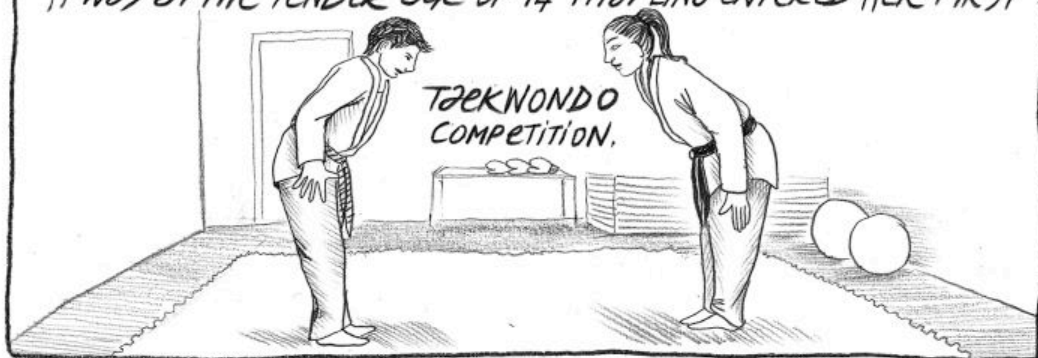
i'll  
make  
sure of  
it!

you're too good  
not to  
continue

AND  
DIDN'T  
WASTE  
A MOMENT  
TO INFORM  
HER PARENTS  
OF HER IMME-  
SURABLE TALENT.



IT WAS AT THE TENDER AGE OF 14 THAT LINA ENTERED HER FIRST



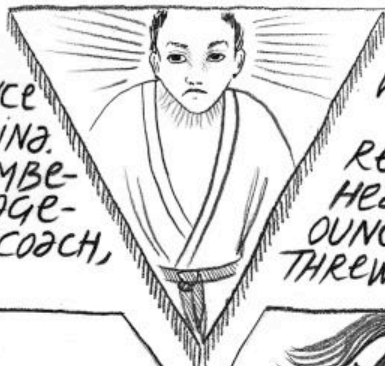
AS SHE STEPPED TO THE SPARRING FLOOR, LINA BECAME UNSETTLED; SHE WAS NERVOUS. SHE COULDN'T HELP NOTICE THE CONTRAST OF HER OPPONENT'S BELT TO HER OWN.



A BLUE BELT HERSELF, LINA WASN'T GOING UP AGAINST ANOTHER ORDINARY FIGHTER; SHE WAS FIGHTING A PROFESSIONAL

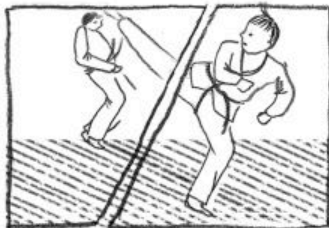
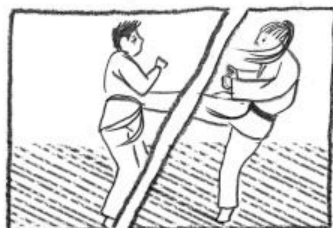


AS THE BELL TOLLED A RUSH OF CONFIDENCE SOARED THROUGH LINA. SHE BEGAN REMEMBERING THE ENCOURAGEMENT FROM HER COACH,

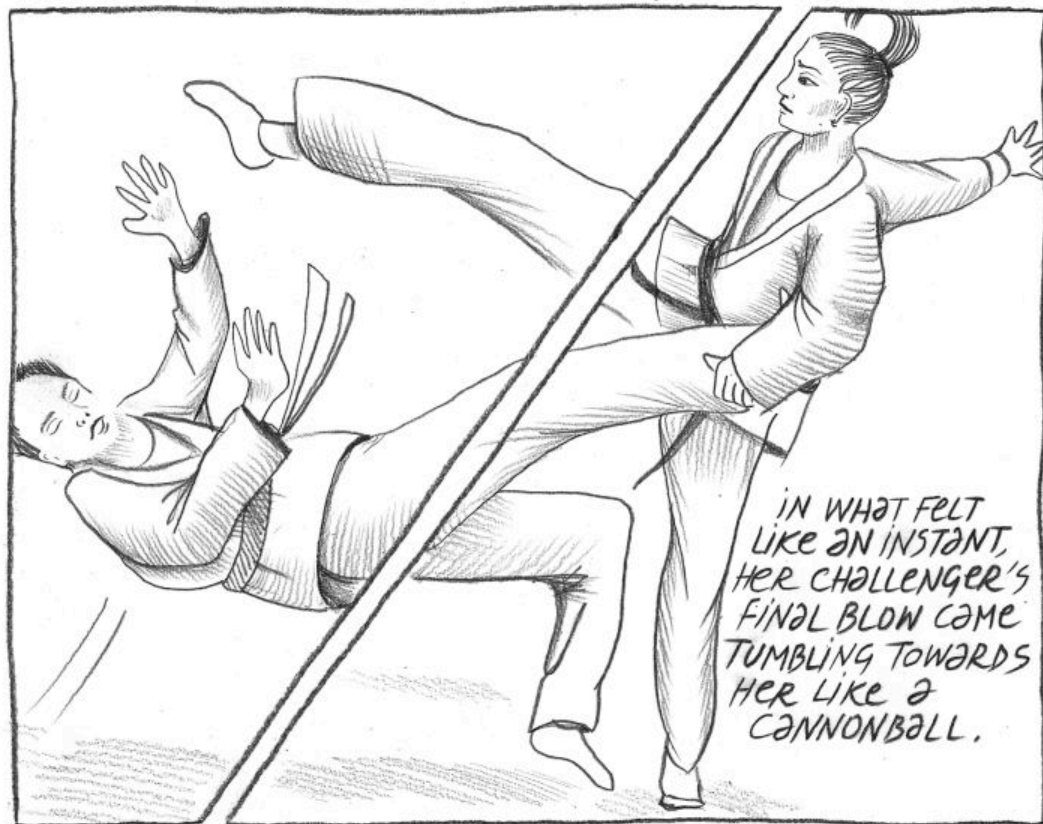


AND REPLAYED HIS WORDS OF PRAISE LIKE A LOOPING RECORD INSIDE HER HEAD. WITH EVERY OUNCE OF ENERGY, SHE THREW HER FIRST KICK.

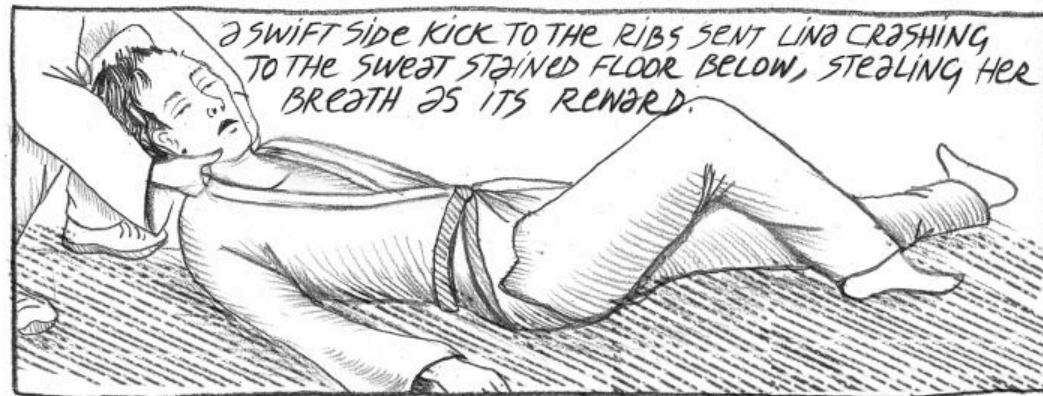




THE SHOTS FROM HER OPPONENT RANG OUT ACROSS THE HALL.

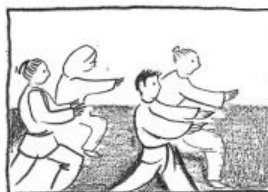
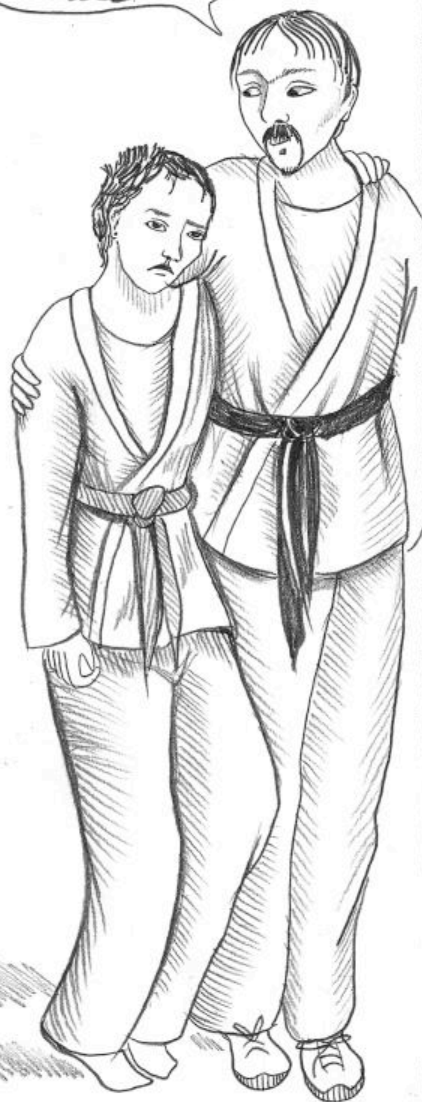


IN WHAT FELT  
LIKE AN INSTANT,  
HER CHALLENGER'S  
FINAL BLOW CAME  
TUMBLING TOWARDS  
HER LIKE A  
CANNONBALL.

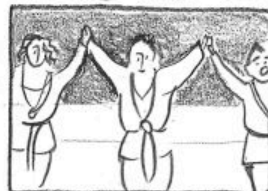


A SWIFT SIDE KICK TO THE RIBS SENT LINA CRASHING  
TO THE SWEAT STAINED FLOOR BELOW, STEALING HER  
BREATH AS ITS REWARD.

the first fight.  
you have to  
lose ...



AFTER THIS LONG DEFEAT, LINA  
STEPPED BACK INTO THE DOJO,  
TRAINING HARDER THAN SHE  
EVER HAD BEFORE.



FROM THIS MOMENT ON, LINA  
WOULD WIN; FIGHT AFTER  
FIGHT.

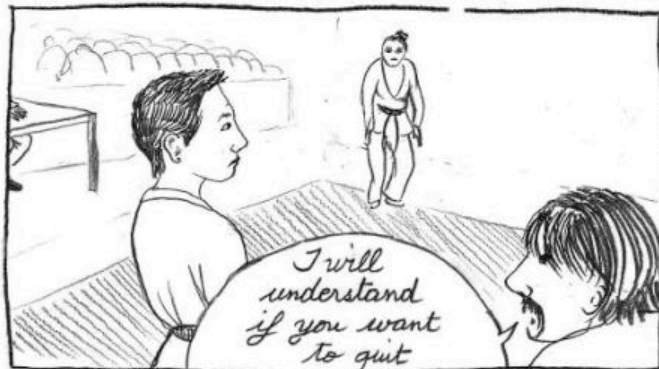
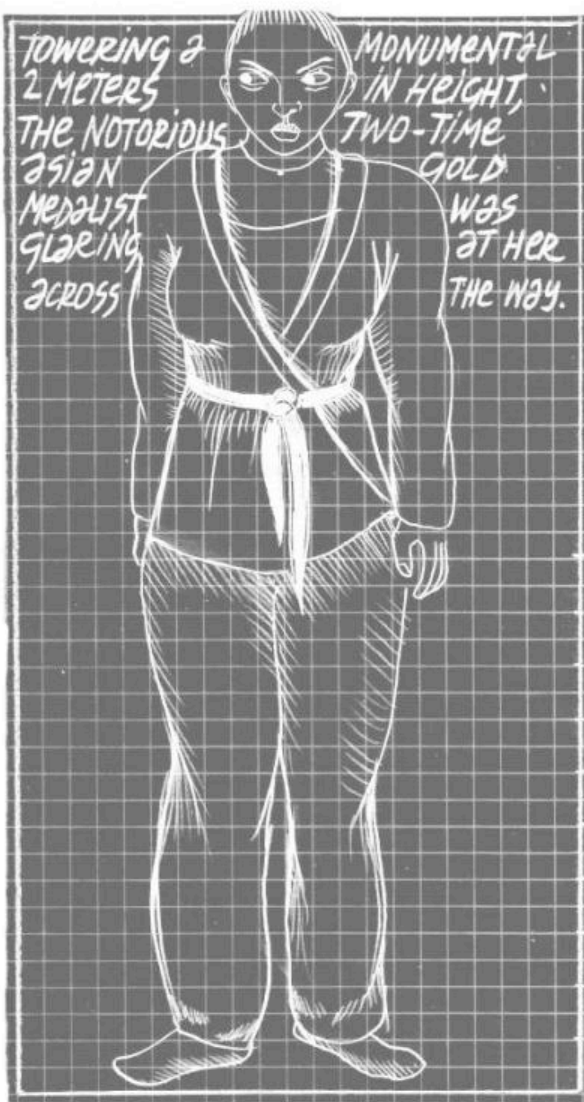
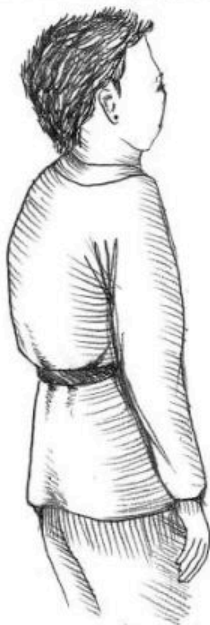
THIS WASN'T JUST HER  
FIRST FIGHT,

IT WAS A TEST. A TRIAL  
TO GET BACK UP AFTER  
BEING KNOCKED DOWN.



A FEW MONTHS WOULD PASS  
BEFORE LINA WOULD FACE  
HER MOST CHALLENGING  
OPPONENT.

STEPPING INTO THE RING,  
LINA GAZED ACROSS THE  
FLOOR TO MEET THE EYES  
OF HER CHALLENGER.



AFTER A FEROCIOUS BATTLE, LINA STOOD TALL IN THE CENTER OF THE RING BESIDE HER GREATEST ADVERSARY.

29 DROPS OF SWEAT  
TRICKLED FROM HER  
FOREHEAD,

THE JUDGES RAISED THEIR  
BALLOTS TO THE SKY FOR ALL  
EYES TO SEE.

THE VOTE HAD BEEN CAST,  
FAVORING LINA 13 TO 10.

SHE HAD TRIUMPHED.



AFTER THE COMPETITION, LINA WAS BACK TO HER NORMAL ROUTINE. SHE HAD FINALLY FOUND HER PLACE. SHE WAS HAPPY



SOME WEEKS LATER, LINA WAS TAKING A BREAK FROM HER DAILY RESPONSIBILITIES, PLAYING A FRIENDLY GAME OF FOOTBALL IN A NEARBY FIELD.



AS LINA LEAPT ACROSS THE FIELD WITH THE BALL TUMBLING BELOW HER FEET,



A SUDDEN SEARING PAIN SHOT THROUGH  
HER LEG LIKE A VICIOUS BOLT  
OF LIGHTNING.



AN ALL TOO FAMILIAR  
EXPERIENCE,  
LINA CAME CRASHING  
TO THE FLOOR.



AFTER LIFTING  
HER HEAD FROM THE  
ROASTING BLADES OF GRASS ON  
THE FIELD FLOOR, HER EYES WERE  
MET WITH THE CLOUDED NIGHTMARE OF ANY ATHLETE;  
SHE HAD DISLOCATED HER LEG.

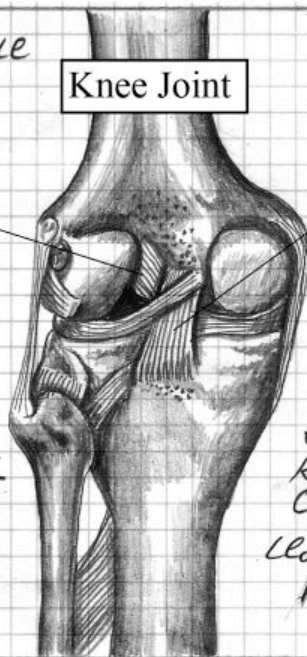
BUT IT WAS NOT A SIMPLE  
DISLOCATION.

Anterior Cruciate  
Ligament  
(ACL)

Knee Joint

Posterial Cruciate Ligament  
(PCL)

THE FALL HAD CAUSED  
SEVERE TEARING IN  
LINA'S PCL AND ACL -  
TWO OF THE LEG'S MOST  
INSTRUMENTAL  
LIGAMENTS  
FOR MOVEMENT.



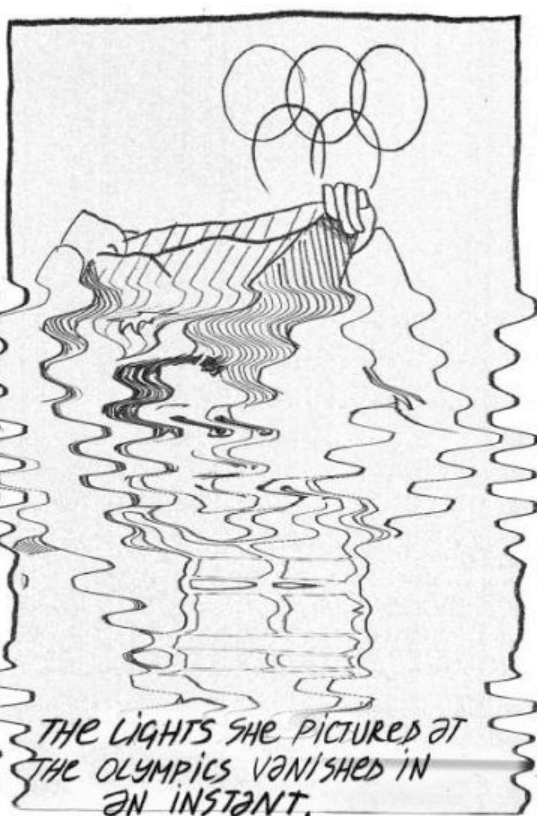
TO ADD INSULT  
TO INJURY,  
PERFORMING  
EMERGENCY SURGERY  
RESULTED IN FURTHER  
COMPLICATIONS,  
LEAVING HER WITH  
PERMANENT DAMAGE  
TO HER KNEE.



THE WORDS FELT EMPTY. THERE WAS NO REMORSE. NO SYMPATHY. JUST SIMPLE ADVICE TO MOVE ON, AND GO BACK DOWN THE ROAD SHE HAD COME FROM.

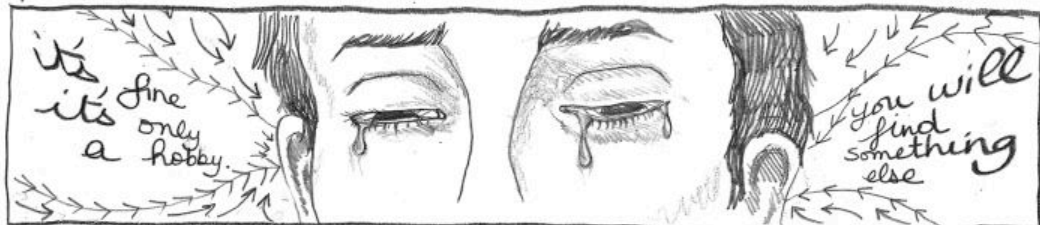


HER TRAINING WAS OVER.



THE LIGHTS SHE PICTURED AT THE OLYMPICS VANISHED IN AN INSTANT.

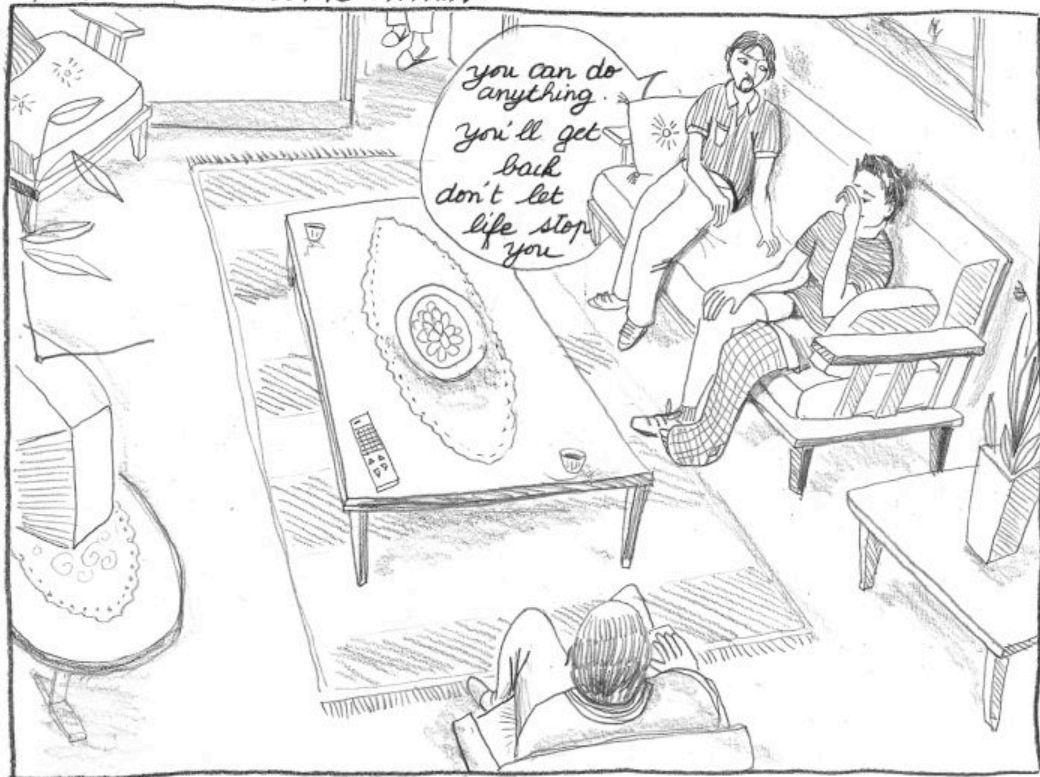
Like a broken record, she repeated the same words over and over again, "God has a bigger plan. Be patient. Everything will get better."



Just then, like a swift right hook to the jaw, she was struck with the wise words from Coach Wael. "it's ok to get hurt sometimes, we just need to pick ourselves back up."



After a visit from Coach Wael himself, his last words to Lina ignited a new flame within.



EVERYTHING SHE  
HAD LOVED SO  
DEAR HAD BEEN  
STRIPPED AWAY.



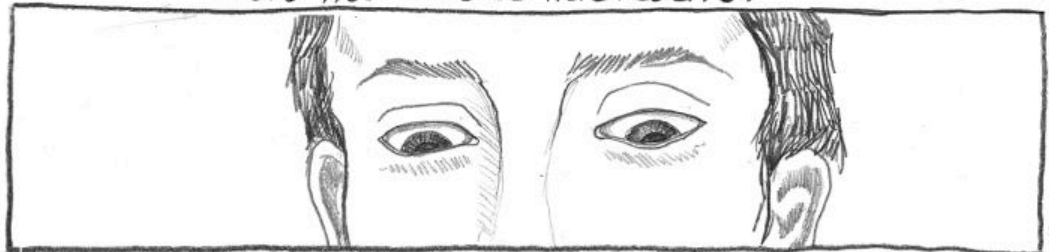
THE NEXT 20 DAYS WOULD BE SHEER TORTURE FOR LINA. BOUND TO THE COUCH  
BY HER INJURY, LINA'S POWER HAD BEEN UNRIGHTFULLY ROBBED FROM HER  
WITHOUT WARNING.



SHE WAS BACK ON THE ISLAND, GAZING INTO THE CLOUDED DISTANCE OF THE  
FUTURE. SHE HAD NEVER FELT SO ALONE.

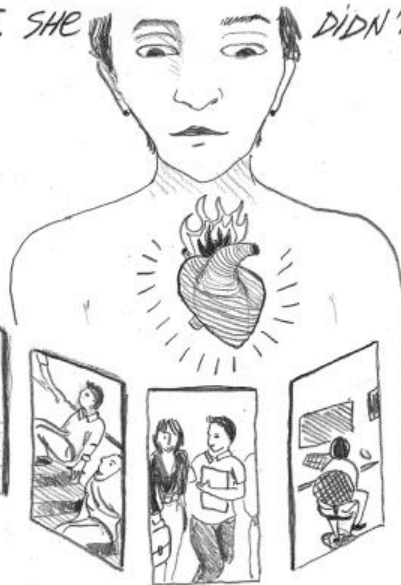


UNABLE TO TRAIN, RUN, OR EVEN WALK, THE LIFE SHE HAD GROWN TO  
FEAR HAD BECOME HER REALITY.





SO, LINA WAS PATIENT. SHE DIDN'T RUSH. SHE WAITED.



WHILE STUDYING  
FRENCH  
LITERATURE,  
AT THE UNI-  
VERSITY OF  
JORDAN,

LINA WAS FACED  
WITH AN ALL TOO  
FAMILIAR SIGHT.  
IT WAS THIS SIGHT  
THAT WOULD SPARK  
AN EPIPHANY.

HER DEAR FRIEND SARAH STROLLED INTO THE UNIVERSITY LECTURE HALL.



HER NATURAL BEAUTY WAS DISGUISED BY A REAM OF CUTS AND BRUISES  
THAT PAINTED ALL CORNERS OF HER FACE.



WITH A SOB, SARAH BEGAN  
TO EXPLAIN.

AFTER FINISHING WORK,  
SARAH WOULD RETURN HOME,  
WHERE SHE WOULD BE  
CONFRONTED BY HER,  
ABUSIVE BROTHER AND  
FATHER.

THEY WOULD BEAT HER AND  
TAKE HER MONEY.





SOMETHING HAD  
TO BE DONE.  
AS LINA TOOK A  
FEW DEEP BREATHS,

SHE MADE THE  
CONSCIOUS  
DECISION TO ACT,  
AND NOT TO REACT.

WHY WOULD  
WOMEN  
ACCEPT THIS?

WHY SHOULD THEY?

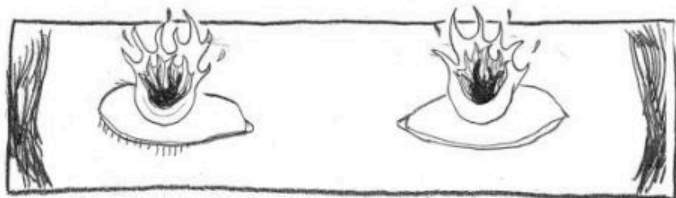
WHY IS THIS  
STILL HAPPENING?

WHAT CAN WE DO?

WHAT CAN  
I DO?







I MIGHT NOT BE ABLE TO FIGHT MYSELF...  
BUT I CAN TEACH OTHERS.

SHE DECIDED THAT SHE WOULD START A MOVEMENT, A PLACE WHERE  
WOMEN COULD LEARN TO DEFEND THEMSELVES ONCE AND FOR ALL.

A PLACE TO FIGHT  
IS ONE.



WHEN CAMPAIGNING HER IDEA, LINA WAS  
FREQUENTLY MET WITH THE SAME ARGUMENT

"THAT'S HOW THINGS ARE.  
YOU CAN'T CHANGE THE  
WORLD BY YOURSELF"



SHE NOTICED THE FINAL DWINDLING SPECKS OF HOPE IN WOMEN'S EYES.  
THEY HAD GIVEN UP THE FIGHT LONG AGO AFTER SO MANY DECADES OF  
DEFEAT.

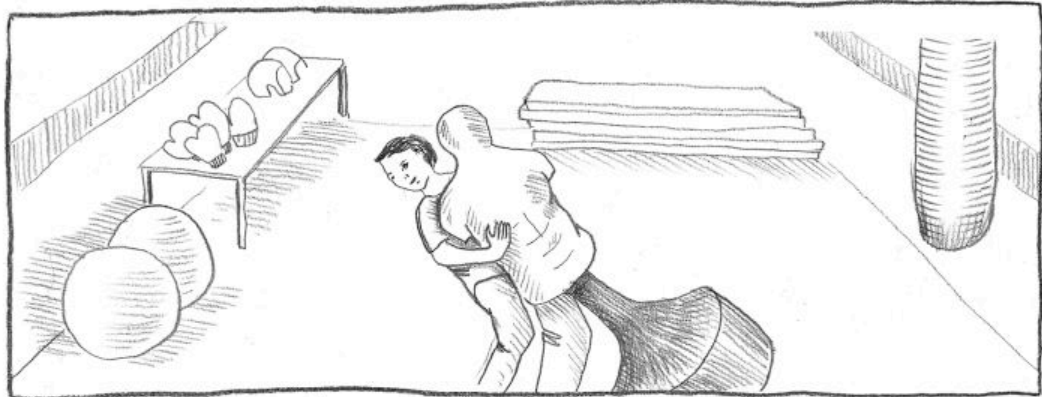


AS FIGHTING FEMALES WERE A SOCIAL TABOO, MANY WOMEN  
SIMPLY LACKED THE CONFIDENCE TO STEP FORWARD.

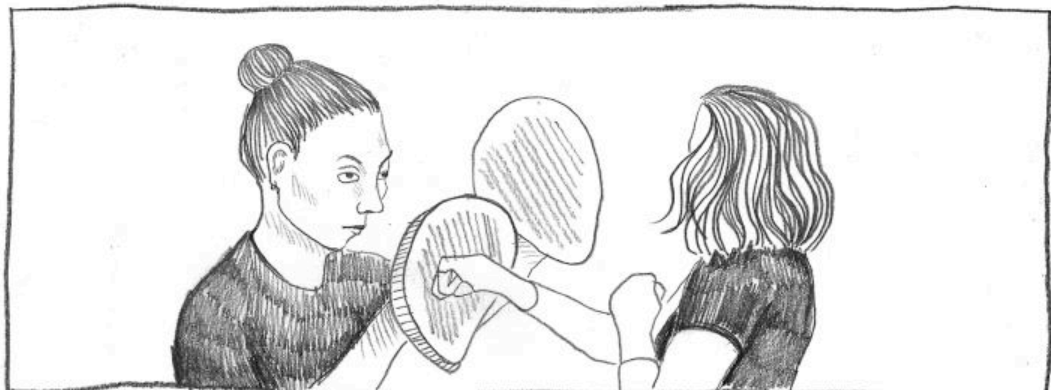
SO, LINA BEGAN TACKLING THE ISSUE UNDER A DIFFERENT PREMISE.



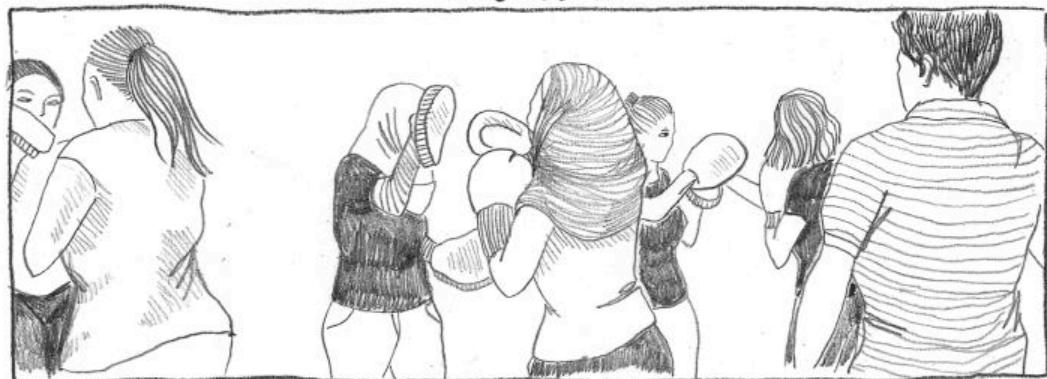
BEGINNING IN THE BOTTOM OF HER PARENT'S FAMILY BASEMENT...



LINA BEGAN HOSTING FREE SELF-DEFENSE CLASSES FOR WOMEN, PURCHASING HER EQUIPMENT WITH THE LITTLE SAVINGS SHE HAD.

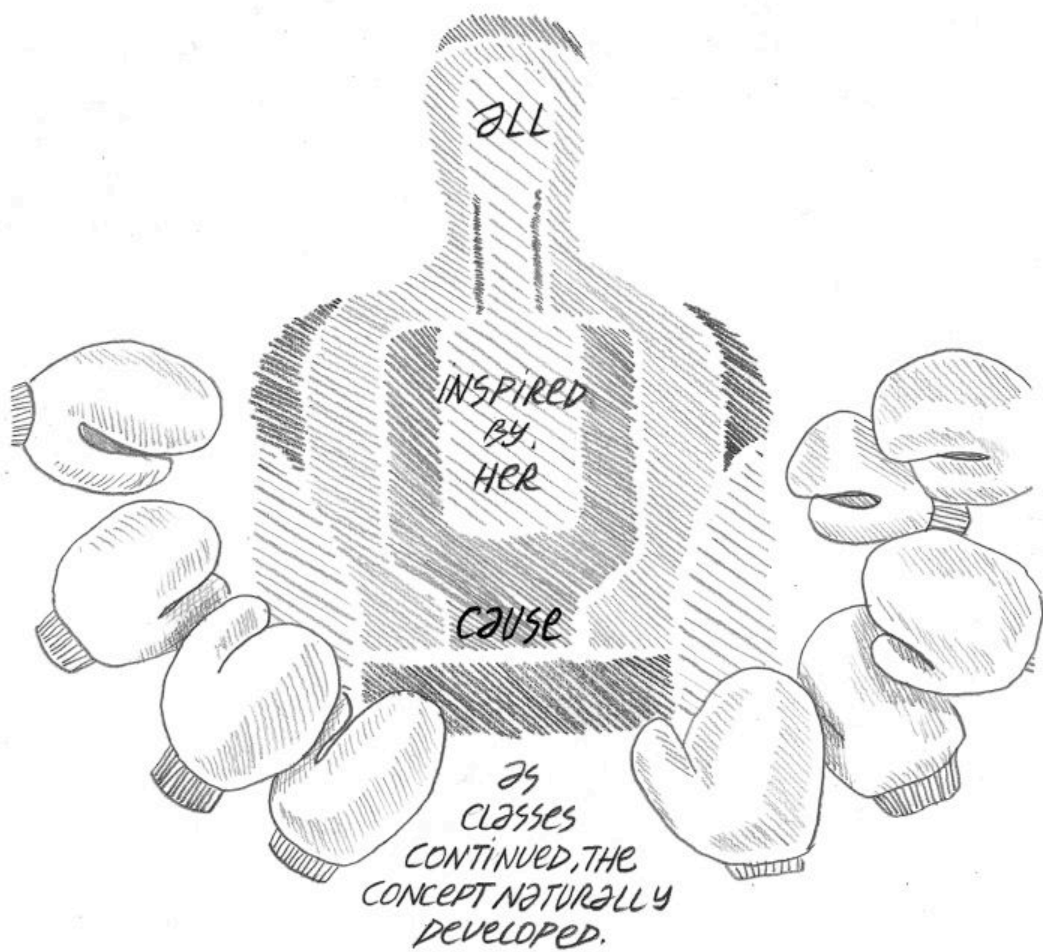


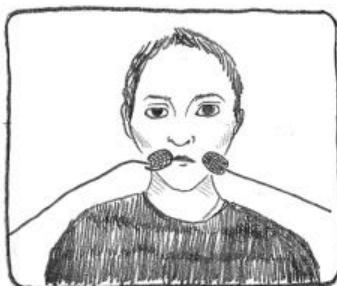
FOR HER FIRST SESSION, LINA STOOD BEFORE TWO WOMEN. A SMALL CLASS... BUT A START.



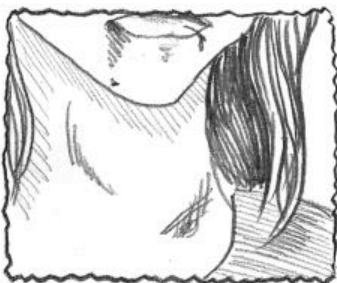
AFTER THE FIRST DAY, THE TWO WOMEN BEGAN ENCOURAGING OTHERS TO SIGN UP. FURTHER CAMPAIGNING AT THE UNIVERSITY, AS WELL AS ONLINE, BEGAN TO DRAW MORE AND MORE PEOPLE TO THE CLASSES.

BEFORE SHE KNEW IT, LINA WAS STANDING BEFORE 10 WOMEN.



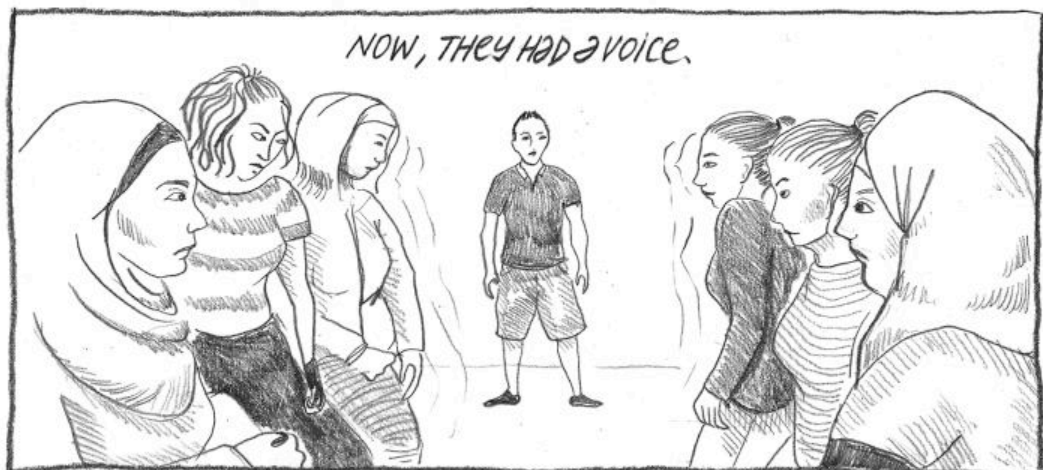


CONFERENCES WERE  
INTRODUCED THAT  
SPOKE ABOUT ISSUES-  
SUCH AS HARRASSMENT  
AND DOMESTIC  
VIOLENCE.

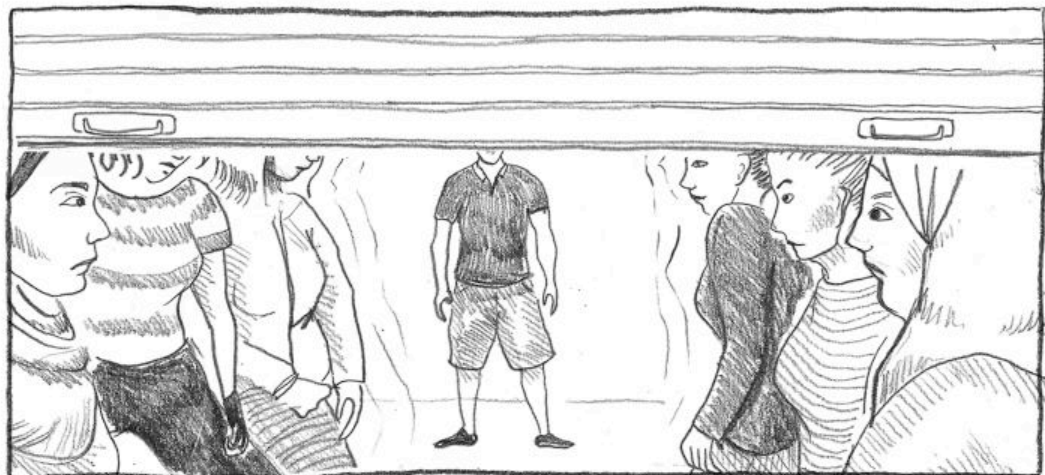


ALL THESE MATTERS  
AFFECTED THESE  
WOMEN BOTH  
DIRECTLY AND INDI-  
RECTLY FOR YEARS.

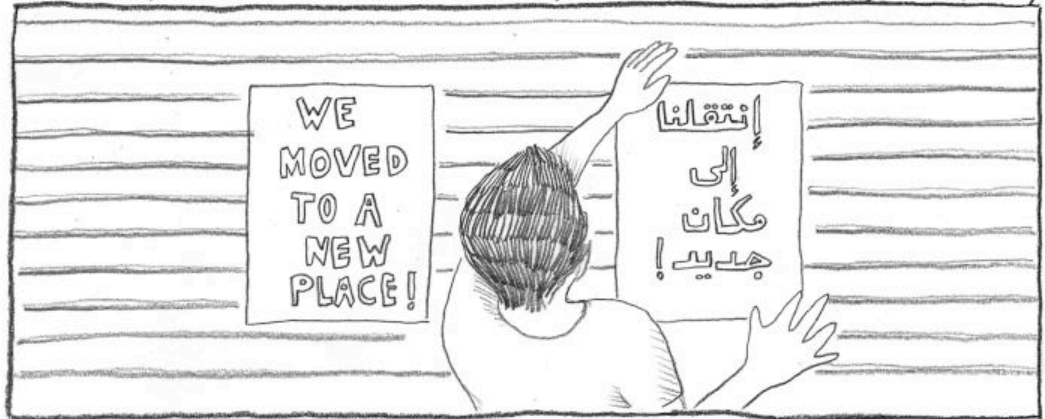
NOW, THEY HAD A VOICE.



IT WASN'T LONG BEFORE THE BASEMENT BECAME CRAMPED, AND  
LINA WAS FORCED TO ACQUIRE A BIGGER, MORE PRACTICAL SPACE  
TO HOST HER CLASSES.



SHE CALLED GYM AFTER GYM, ENQUIRING ALL OVER AMMAN TO FIND A NEW SPACE FOR HER SESSIONS. SHE EVEN OFFERED TO HOST FREE SEMINARS, AND PROMOTIONAL ADVERTISING JUST TO GET HERSELF GOING.

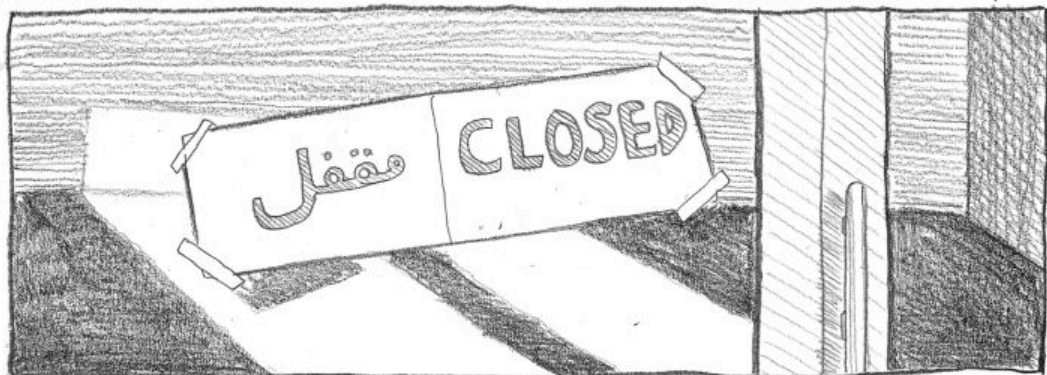


NOT LONG AFTER SECURING A FULL-TIME SPACE IN A NEARBY WOMEN'S ONLY GYM.



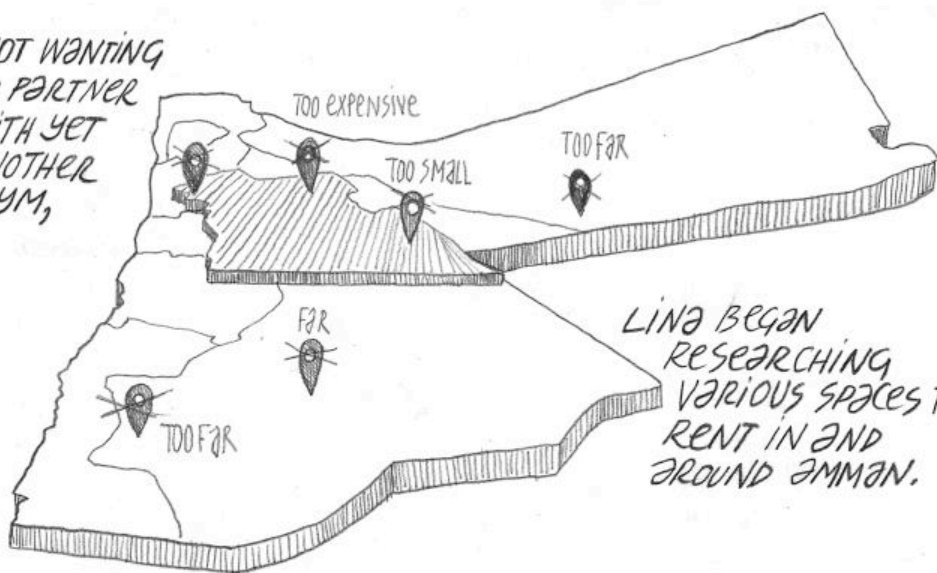
THE PRESSURE FROM THE MANAGEMENT SOON SHOWED. AS MORE AND MORE STUDENTS BEGAN ATTENDING LINA'S CLASSES, THE OWNER WAS WORRIED THAT HIS BUSINESS WOULD BE AFFECTED.

THREATENED BY HER SUCCESS, THE OWNER PUSHED LINA OUT.



IT WAS BACK TO SQUARE ONE.

NOT WANTING  
TO PARTNER  
WITH YET  
ANOTHER  
GYM,



LINA BEGAN  
RESEARCHING  
VARIOUS SPACES TO  
RENT IN AND  
AROUND AMMAN.

WHILE VERY FEW OFFERS WERE PLACED  
ON THE TABLE, LINA KNEW THAT HER  
CONCEPT WAS STRONG ENOUGH  
TO STAND ON ITS OWN.



OUT OF THE BLUE, LINA RECEIVED A CALL FROM ONE OF HER CLIENTS.



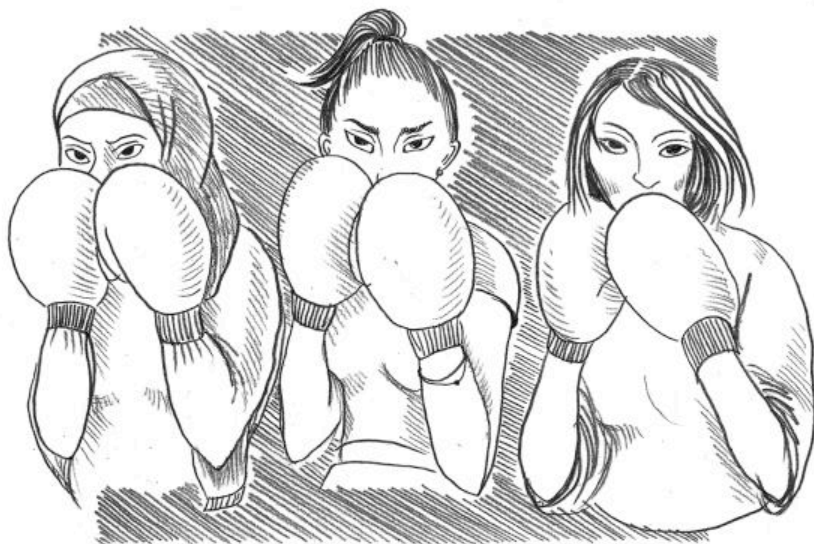
SHE HAD FOUND A SPACE. WITH ENOUGH FUNDS TO COVER 6 MONTHS OF RENT, LINA KNEW THAT SHE WOULD BE ABLE TO PURCHASE ENOUGH EQUIPMENT WITH THE MONEY SHE COLLECTED FROM MEMBERSHIPS.

AFTER HOSTING A FAIR FEW CLASSES, AND ESTABLISHING HERSELF IN HER NEW HOME,

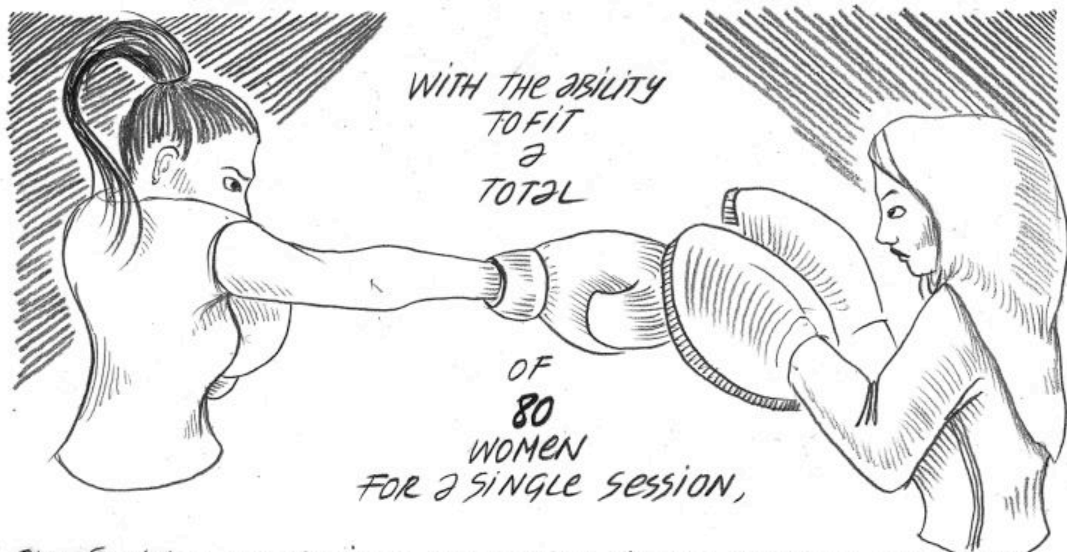
# She Fighter

WAS OFFICIALLY BORN.





TODAY, She fighter is THE ONLY STUDIO IN THE MIDDLE EAST THAT  
TRAINS WOMEN IN SELF-DEFENSE.

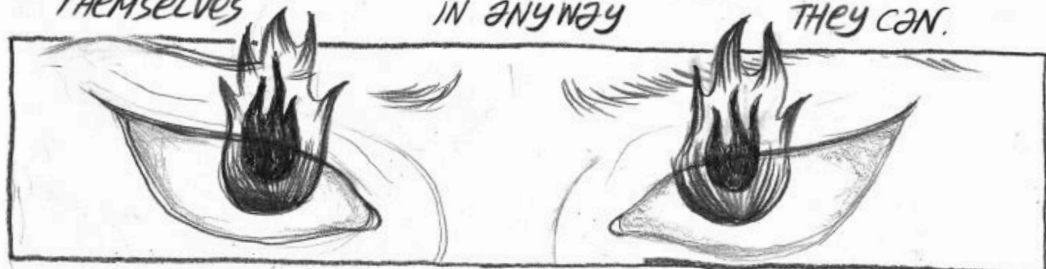


SHE FIGHTER HAS TRAINED MORE THAN 12,000 WOMEN, AND OVER  
100 TRAINERS SINCE ITS BEGINNING.





every day, various seminars and classes are held to encourage women from across the middle east to stand up for themselves in anyway they can.



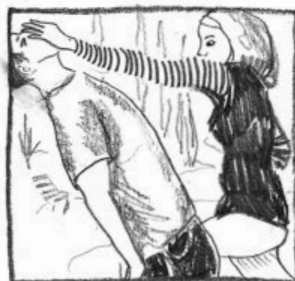
WHILE  
a self-  
defence  
studio on  
the surface,  
the concept  
of SheFighter  
incorporates so  
much more  
than  
just self  
defence.  
This move-  
ment is set  
to inspire confi-  
dence in women all  
over the  
globe.



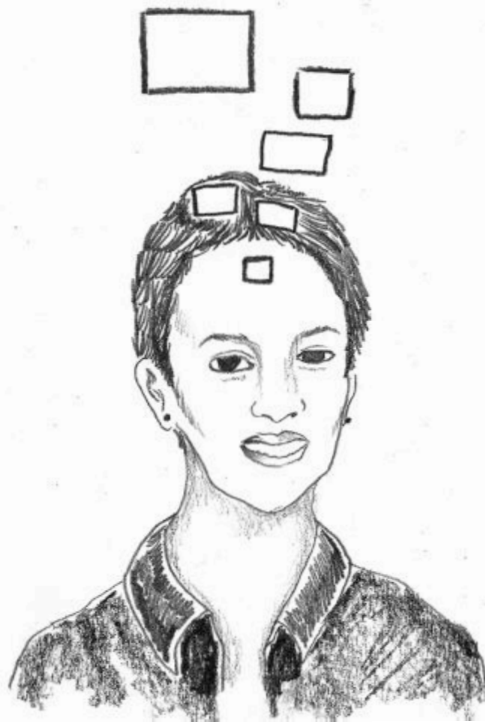
Before  
entering  
the doors,  
they may  
feel weak,  
unhappy,  
or lack  
the confi-  
dence to  
stand up for  
themselves.  
But, when  
they leave,  
an incredible  
transforma-  
tion takes  
place.



THE CHANGE WOMEN GO THROUGH AT THESE SESSIONS ISN'T JUST A PHYSICAL TRANSFORMATION, BUT A MENTAL ONE - TRAINING THEIR MINDS TO BELIEVE THAT THEY CAN DO ANYTHING THEIR HEARTS DESIRE.



THE SMALLEST DECISIONS - LIKE GETTING A JOB, OR EVEN TAKING A TAXI - CAN BE ENCOURAGED BY JOINING SheFighter.





AFTER A FEW WEEKS OF STEPPING INTO THE RING SHE FINALLY FELT AT HOME, SHE HADN'T JUST CREATED A SELF-DEFENCE STUDIO, SHE HAD MADE A FAMILY. A FAMILY THAT LINDA HOPES TO GROW AND GROW.

**The end**

# Karen Keyrouz

Living between the blurred lines of reality and imagination, Karen Keyrouz spends most of her days wandering the infectiously mysterious streets of Beirut in search of inspiration. Focusing mainly on autobiographical and psychological themes for her work, Karen employs a variety of different techniques in her comics and illustrations - with each medium lending itself to a unique style of narrative.

# Raphaelle Macaron

A Lebanese comic author, and illustrator, Raphaelle Macaron made her mark in the cities of Beirut, Montreal, and Paris as a freelance graphic designer. After working in the Lebanese comic collective 'Samandal' for a number of years, Raphaelle relocated to Paris, where she is focusing on her very own graphic novel, and various other self-publications.

# Zeina Bassil

Born in the bustling city streets of downtown Lebanon, comic illustrator and bookseller Zeina Bassil has been exploring the culture of the Middle East for longer than she can remember. Collaborating with a number of local publishers and designers on various projects, Zeina has published a number of acclaimed works over the years, and founded the stationery line 'Zenobie'.



If you were inspired by these remarkable life stories, make sure to watch how **Lina, Safiya, Muna**, and many other **#WomenOfChange** are continuing to make a difference at:

**[youtube.com/maggiarabia](https://youtube.com/maggiarabia) or**  
**[maggime.com/maggi-diaries](https://maggime.com/maggi-diaries)**

Her struggle for equal rights  
was getting her nowhere. She knew she had to fight.



*"Women and girls  
need more role models  
so they become  
leaders themselves."*



# Diaries<sup>®</sup>

REAL STORIES OF WOMEN, FOOD AND CHANGE

"There is still, around the world and in this region, a deeply rooted belief that men are the only ones in charge of society's big changes. The truth is, however, that off the radar and away from the media spotlight, millions of women are relentlessly improving life within their communities. No matter how big or small their projects may be, they are always inspiring, effective, and grounded in moral and ethical values. It's great that this work is starting to get them noticed." Alex Brunori - Creative Lead, Google MENA

Watch Lina Khalifeh's incredible story by visiting [youtube.com/maggiarabia](https://youtube.com/maggiarabia)

ARE YOU A  
**WOMAN**  
**OF CHANGE?**



or do you know anybody who is making  
a positive impact on society through  
her passion, commitment, or work?

Submit your story, or nominate someone  
else to **facebook.com/MaggiArabia** – along  
with **#WomenOfChange** – for a chance  
to be featured in the upcoming  
season of **Maggi Diaries**.



# Diaries<sup>o</sup>

REAL STORIES OF WOMEN, FOOD AND CHANGE