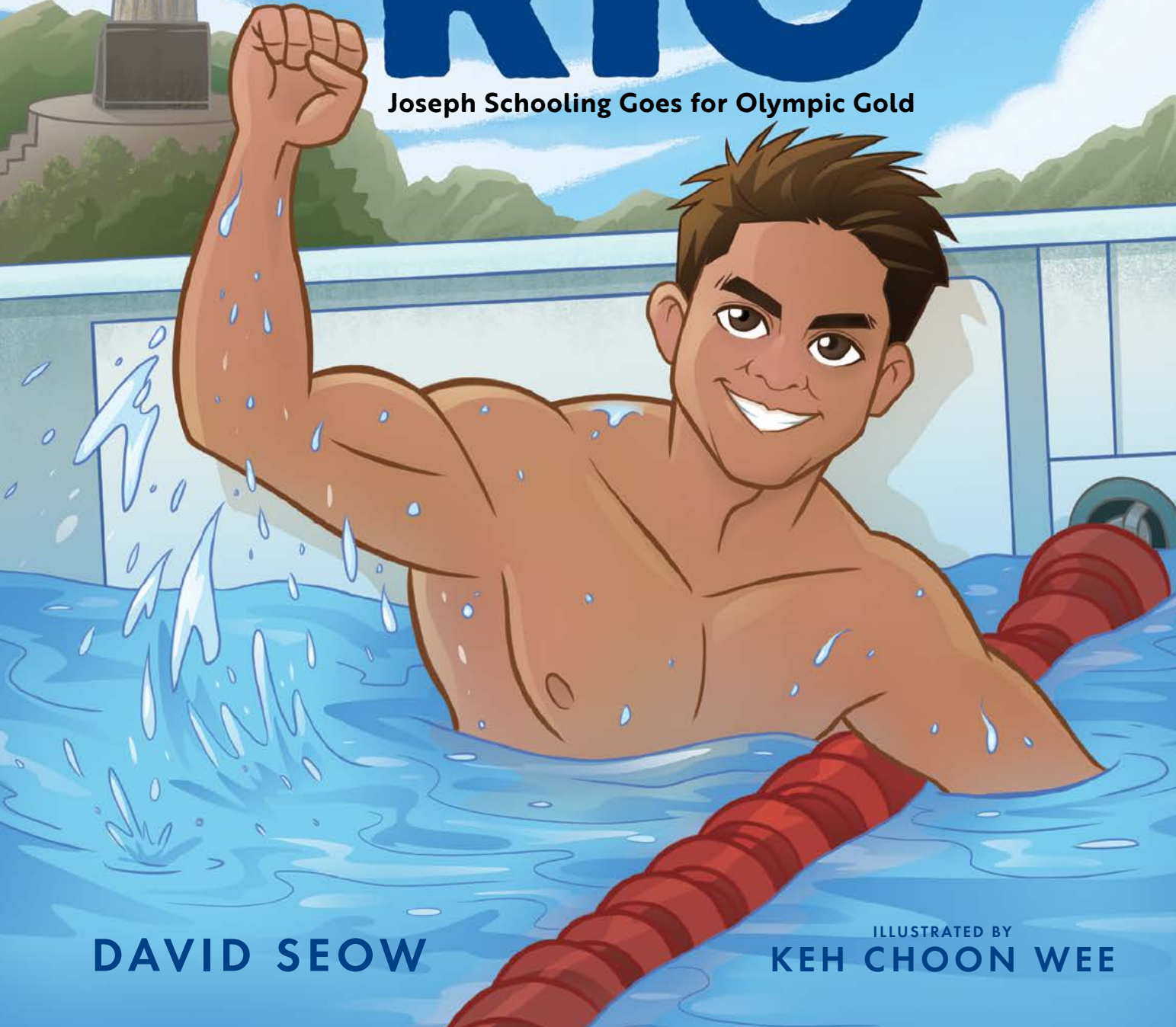


· PROMINENT SINGAPOREANS ·



RACE TO RIO

Joseph Schooling Goes for Olympic Gold



DAVID SEOW

ILLUSTRATED BY
KEH CHOON WEE

RACE TO RIO



For my family, the Seows, who have always supported me in everything and to the Schoolings, who have shown anything is possible with faith and perseverance.

— DAVID

For my Daddy, Ma, Sis, Nick and Eunice for always believing in me and their unwavering support.
To my niece Megan, this is for you.

— CHOON WEE

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Little Joseph loved listening to stories about his granduncle Lloyd, the first Singaporean to compete at an Olympic Games.



"I'm going to the Olympics too," he said.



It was not hard to decide what sport Joseph would compete in. Even when he was a baby, he just loved being in the water.

"Wim, wim," he said.

"What did he say?" asked Dad. "Win?"

"I think he says he wants to swim," said Mum.

And so they decided to give him swimming lessons.



Early one morning, Joseph rushed into his parents' room.
"Dad, Dad, wake up! I have to go!"

"Go where?" Dad asked. "It's only 4am."

"Swim training," said Joseph with a grin. "All swimmers start training early. Let's go now!"

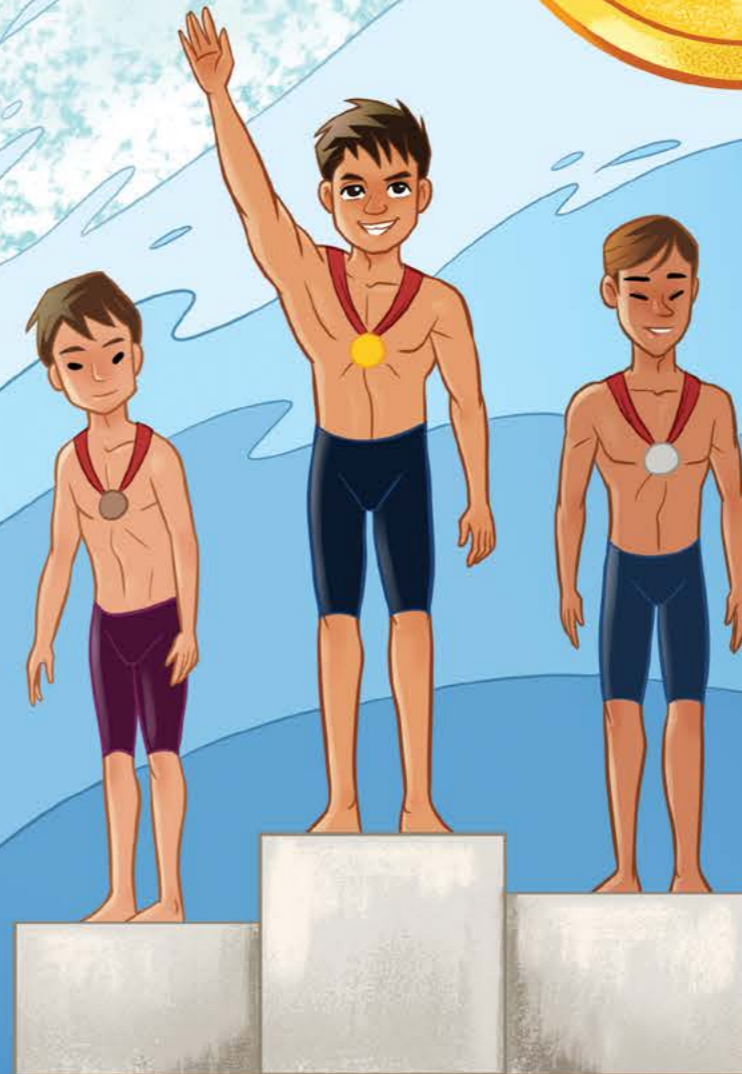
"Then you will have to train hard and listen to your coaches," said Dad.

"And you will have to keep up with your school work too," Mum added.

"I promise I will," said Joseph. And so Mum and Dad agreed that he could start proper training.



When Joseph was not studying at Anglo-Chinese School, he was in the pool training. Sometimes he even skipped going out with his friends to train. Soon, Joseph began collecting medals at all his swim meets.

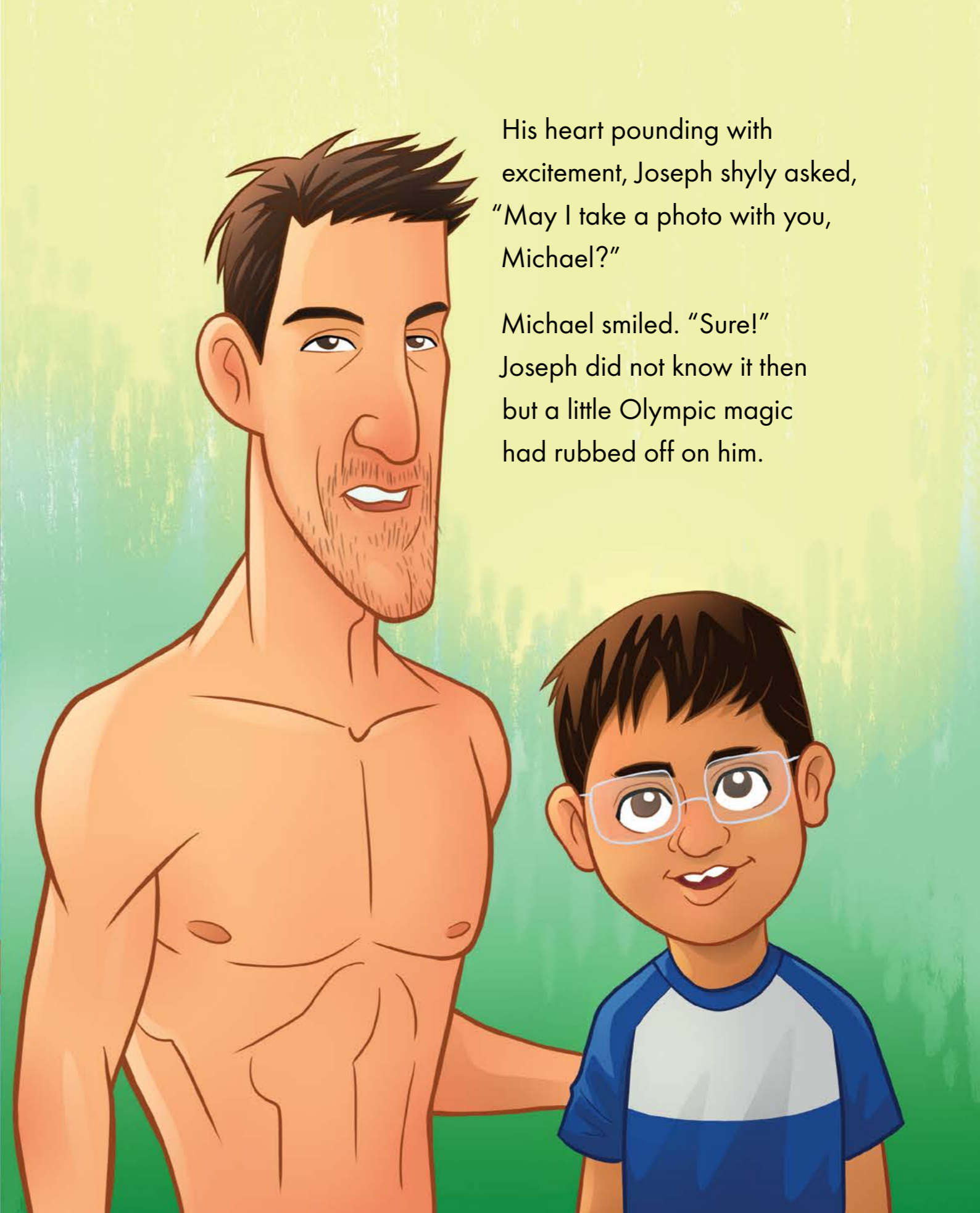


Then right before the 2008 Olympics, Joseph met the man who was to become the greatest Olympic swimmer of all time—Michael Phelps. He was training with the American team at the Singapore Island Country Club, the same place where Joseph trained.



His heart pounding with excitement, Joseph shyly asked, “May I take a photo with you, Michael?”

Michael smiled. “Sure!” Joseph did not know it then but a little Olympic magic had rubbed off on him.





A week later, Joseph watched as his hero went on to collect eight gold medals at the Olympics, something no one had ever done before.

Joseph hoped that one day he might win a medal at the Olympics and inspire other young swimmers too.

But no one in Singapore had ever won an Olympic swimming medal. To do so, he would have to train with the trainers of champions in America. Mum and Dad were not too sure.

“You’ll be leaving your home, family and friends,” they said.

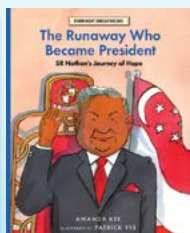
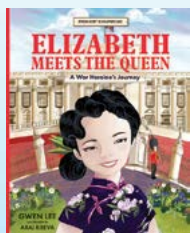
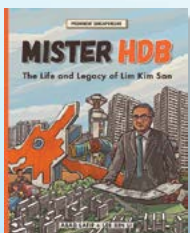
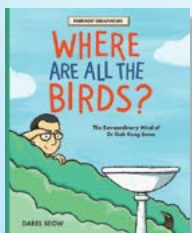
“Please? Please?” Joseph pleaded. He begged a bit, like we do when we really want something. He wanted to study and train at the Bolles School. Mum and Dad finally agreed. Joseph’s Olympic journey had begun.





At the 2016 Games in Brazil,
Joseph Schooling became the first Singaporean
to win an Olympic gold medal. It was a childhood
dream come true. In Rio, he proved that no dream
was too big for a boy from a very small island.

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