**10c Page 123 READING TEXT**

Intermediate Student’s Book

Life

Diane Van Deren

On 15 February 2009, Diane Van Deren was one of a dozen runners taking part in the Yukon Arctic Ultra, a 700-kilometre race across frozen tundra in the middle of winter. Not a single woman had ever completed it. With temperatures of 30 degrees below zero and only seven hours of daylight each day, it’s probably the toughest race in the world. But, then, there is no woman like Diane Van Deren.

Twelve years earlier, Van Deren, a former professional tennis player, had a kiwi-size piece of her brain taken out. It was part of the treatment for the epilepsy which she suffered from. The operation was successful, but she noticed a strange side effect: she could run without stopping for hours.

At the start of the Arctic Ultra, icy winds froze Van Deren’s water supplies, so she had nothing to drink for the first 160 kilometres. She kept going by sucking on frozen fruit and nut bars. On the eleventh day, the ice beneath her feet cracked open and Van Deren fell up to her shoulders into a freezing river. She managed to climb out but struggled to continue. Her soaked boots had frozen to her feet.

Yet somehow through it all, Van Deren remained positive. This was perhaps helped by another curious by-product of her operation. ‘I have a problem with short-term memory. I could be out running for two weeks, but if someone told me it was day one of a race,’ she jokes, ‘I’d say, “Great, let’s get started!”’

On 26 February 2009 – exactly twelve years after her surgery – Van Deren crossed the finish line of the Arctic Ultra. She was one of eight finishers – and the first and only woman.

epilepsy (n) /ˈepɪˌlepsi/ an illness affecting the brain

by-product (n) /ˈbaɪˌprɒdʌkt/ a result which was not planned

John Dau

In 2001, John Dau boarded a plane to New York. It was the beginning of one trip but the end of a journey which had taken him more than half of his life. In 1987, aged thirteen, Dau had fled his home in southern Sudan, running from the soldiers sent to destroy his village. He met up with a small group of boys like himself and together they walked for weeks to reach a refugee camp in Ethiopia. ‘I was barefoot and wearing no clothes; at night the desert was so cold. We thought about our parents all the time,’ remembers Dau. The boys had no food and nothing to drink. ‘We chewed grass and ate mud to stay alive.’

Moving through hostile territory, the boys walked by night and slept by day. Eventually they reached the camp, where Dau spent the next four years. As one of the older boys, Dau led and took care of a group of younger children which eventually numbered 1,200. But Dau was forced to run again when the camp came under threat. Along with 27,000 other boys, he set off to walk back to Sudan. To get there they had to cross the Gilo River. ‘Rebels were shooting at us, so we had to dive into water infested with crocodiles,’ Dau recounts.

Thousands of boys were eaten, drowned, shot or captured, and only 18,000 of them made it into Sudan. But the area was soon attacked, so Dau and the other ‘Lost Boys’ of Sudan set off south again, this time to a camp in Kenya. By now, Dau had walked more than 1,600 kilometres.

Ten years later, Dau was one of a handful of ‘Lost Boys’ sponsored to study in the USA. A new kind of journey was about to begin.

refugee camp (n) /ˌrefjʊˈdʒiː kamp/ a temporary home for people who have left their country of origin

rebel (n) /ˈreb(ə)l/ a soldier fighting against a government

Life