

# *The Wrestlers: A Story of Heroes*

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Indian

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*Intermediate  
6 min read*

There was, once upon a time, long ago, a wrestler living in a far country, who, hearing there was a mighty man in India, determined to have a fall with him; so, tying up ten thousand pounds weight of flour in his blanket, he put the bundle on his head and set off jauntily. Towards evening he came to a little pond in the middle of the desert, and sat down to eat his dinner. First, he stooped down and took a good long drink of the water; then, emptying his flour into the remainder of the pond, stirred it into good thick brose, off which he made a hearty meal, and lying down under a tree, soon fell fast asleep.

Now, for many years an elephant had drunk daily at the pond, and, coming as usual that evening for its draught, was surprised to find nothing but a little mud and flour at the bottom.

‘What shall I do?’ it said to itself, ‘for there is no more water to be found for twenty miles!’

Going away disconsolate, it espied the wrestler sleeping placidly under the tree, and at once made sure he was the author of the mischief; so, galloping up to the sleeping man, it stamped on his head in a furious rage, determined to crush him.

But, to his astonishment, the wrestler only stirred a little, and said sleepily, 'What is the matter? what is the matter? If you want to shampoo my head, why the plague don't you do it properly? What's worth doing at all is worth doing well; so put a little of your weight into it, my friend!'

The elephant stared, and left off stamping; but, nothing daunted, seized the wrestler round the waist with its trunk, intending to heave him up and dash him to pieces on the ground. 'Ho! ho! my little friend!—that is your plan, is it?' quoth the wrestler, with a yawn; and catching hold of the elephant's tail, and swinging the monster over his shoulder, he continued his journey jauntily.

By and by he reached his destination, and, standing outside the Indian wrestler's house, cried out, 'Ho! my friend! Come out and try a fall!'

'My husband's not at home to-day,' answered the wrestler's wife from inside; 'he has gone into the wood to cut pea-sticks.'

'Well, well! when he returns give him this, with my compliments, and tell him the owner has come from far to challenge him.'

So saying, he chucked the elephant clean over the courtyard wall.

'Oh, mamma! mamma!' cried a treble voice from within, 'I declare that nasty man has thrown a mouse over the wall into my lap! What shall I do to him?'

'Never mind, little daughter!' answered the wrestler's wife; 'papa will teach him better manners. Take the grass broom and sweep the mouse away.'

Then there was a sound of sweeping, and immediately the dead elephant came flying over the wall.

'Ahem!' thought the wrestler outside, 'if the little daughter can do this, the father will be a worthy foe!'

So he set off to the wood to meet the Indian wrestler, whom he soon saw coming along the road, dragging a hundred and sixty carts laden with brushwood.

‘Now we shall see!’ quoth the stranger, with a wink; and stealing behind the carts, he laid hold of the last, and began to pull.

‘That’s a deep rut!’ thought the Indian wrestler, and pulled a little harder. So it went on for an hour, but not an inch one way or the other did the carts budge.

‘I believe there is some one hanging on behind!’ quoth the Indian wrestler at last, and walked back to see who it was. Whereupon the stranger, coming to meet him, said, ‘We seem pretty well matched; let us have a fall together.’

‘With all my heart!’ answered the other, ‘but not here alone in the wilds; it is no fun fighting without applause.’

‘But I haven’t time to wait!’ said the stranger; ‘I have to be off at once, so it must be here or nowhere.’

Just then an old woman came hurrying by with big strides.

‘Here’s an audience!’ cried the wrestler, and called aloud, ‘Mother! mother! stop and see fair play!’

‘I can’t, my sons, I can’t!’ she replied, ‘for my daughter is going to steal my camels, and I am off to stop her; but if you like, you can jump on to the palm of my hand, and wrestle there as I go along.’

So the wrestlers jumped on to the old woman’s palm, and wrestled away as she strode over hill and dale.

Now when the old woman’s daughter saw her mother, with the wrestlers wrestling on her hand, she said to herself, ‘Here she comes, with the soldiers she spoke about! It is time for me to be off!’

So she picked up the hundred and sixty camels, tied them in her blanket, and swinging it over her shoulder, set off at a run.

But one of the camels put its head out of the blanket and began groaning and hubble-bubble-ubbling, after the manner of camels; so, to quiet it, the girl tore down a tree or two, and stuffed them into the bundle also. On this, the farmer to whom the trees belonged came running up, and calling, 'Stop thief! stop thief!'

'Thief, indeed!' quoth the girl angrily; and with that she bundled farmer, fields, crops, oxen, house, and all into the blanket.

Soon she came to a town, and being hungry, asked a pastry-cook to give her some sweets; but he refused, so she caught up the town bodily; and so on with everything she met, until her blanket was quite full.

At last she came to a big water-melon, and being thirsty, she sat down to eat it; and afterwards, feeling sleepy, she determined to rest a while. But the camels in her bundle made such a hubble-bubble-ubbling that they disturbed her, so she just packed everything into the lower half of the water-melon rind, and popping on the upper half as a lid, she rolled herself in the blanket and used the melon as a pillow.

Now, while she slept, a big flood arose, and carried off the water-melon, which, after floating down stream ever so far, stuck on a mud-bank. The top fell off, and out hopped the camels, the trees, the farmer, the oxen, the house, the town, and all the other things, until there was quite a new world on the mud-bank in the middle of the river.

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