

The Wrestling Match

written by

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FADE IN:

INT. GYMNASIUM - DAY

An elementary school amateur wrestling tournament is in full swing. Shouts. Whistles. Buzzers. Kids scrambling on mats.

INT. SIDE OF THE MAT - DAY

Preparing for his match is short, pudgy YURI, 9. He wears an ill-fitting blue singlet with mustard stains on the chest.

Yuri hold a hot dog in one hand and a large action figure in the other.

Nearby are Yuri's coaches COACH PHIL and COACH WARREN, 40s, both rumped, tired, and a little soft in the middle.

Coach Phil taps his clipboard as he approaches Yuri.

COACH PHIL

Yuri, why are you eating? You're wrestling next.

Yuri smiles sweetly.

COACH PHIL

And there's no toys allowed. Why'd you bring that action figure?

The boy's smile widens.

COACH PHIL

Okay. I want you to wrestle hard. Good stance. Keep your head up. Don't reach back. Don't go to your back. Do the basics. You got that?

YURI

Yes, coach.

COACH PHIL

I think you can win this one.

YURI

Cool.

COACH PHIL

Coach Warren will hold your stuff.

Coach Warren frowns as Yuri hands him the half-eaten hot dog and the action figure.

COACH WARREN
(muttering to himself)
Can't wait for this day to end.

YURI
Hey coach, my uncles are here to
watch. They're from the Ukraine.

COACH WARREN
Really? Ivankiv and Pavlo Romanets
are here? In this gym? Wow.

The boy nods.

Two large, extremely fit men approach Yuri--IVANKIV ROMANETS,
and PAVLO ROMANETS, both in their 30s. Their muscles bulge
under their sweat suits. They have jaws of iron.

The two men sweep past Phil and Warren and pull Yuri several
feet away and talk to him.

Coach Warren points out the Ukrainians to Coach Phil.

COACH WARREN
You know who they are?

Coach Phil shakes his head.

COACH WARREN
That's Ivankiv and Pavlo Romanets.
Ivankiv placed fourth at the world
freestyle wrestling championships
for the Ukraine a few years back.
Pavlo was sixth. I followed it.

COACH PHIL
They're Yuri's uncles?

COACH WARREN
Yeah, you didn't know?

COACH PHIL
No.

They stare.

COACH PHIL
How is that possible? They look
nothing like Yuri.

COACH WARREN
I know.

Along the side of the mat, Ivankiv and Pavlo demonstrate awe-inspiring Olympic level throws to Yuri.

They lift each other off the ground. They twist and tug and spiral. They look like superhuman whirling dervishes.

They shout loud, intense instructions at Yuri in Ukrainian. They want him to destroy.

IVANKIV

Borotysya!

PAVLO

Blockuvanny! Kynuty!

The spittle flies. The Ukrainian men are pumped beyond belief as they prepare Yuri. They shout like Yuri is wrestling in the Olympics.

Everyone in that area of the gym watches their demonstration.

Yuri, however, turns his head back to his hot dog, which seems to interest him the most.

COACH PHIL

They shouldn't be showing those moves to Yuri. He'll hurt himself.

COACH WARREN

Yuri isn't flexible.

COACH PHIL

He can't even touch his toes.

COACH WARREN

His favorite move is sitting down.

COACH PHIL

Should we tell his Ukrainian uncles to back off?

COACH WARREN

I don't know. They're pretty intimidating.

COACH PHIL

Parents and spectators aren't technically allowed on the gym floor with the wrestlers. They should be up in the stands.

The Ukrainian men demonstrate advanced-level lateral throws, gut wrenches, and hammer locks.

COACH PHIL
Screw it. Let's go rescue Yuri.

Phil and Warren nervously approach Pavlo and Ivankiv.

COACH PHIL
Excuse me, guys. Can we see Yuri
for just a second?

Pavlo and Ivankiv disregard Phil completely. They go on
lifting and shouting instructions to him.

COACH PHIL
Hey.

No response. Phil shouts.

COACH PHIL
Hold up.

They turn their heads.

COACH PHIL
We appreciate all the moves that
you're showing Yuri, but we'd like
to reinforce some of the basics
we've been showing him. You're
welcome to watch in the stands.

Pavlo and Ivankiv stare at Phil like he's crazy.

PAVLO
Too weak.

IVANKIV
Train harder.

PAVLO
Teach him.

COACH PHIL
Hold on, guys. Yuri's just starting
out. He's learning. This isn't the
Olympics.

PAVLO
Make him a man.

COACH PHIL
He's not a man. He's nine.

Pavlo points to Warren, still pathetically holding Yuri's hot
dog and action figure.

PAVLO

Coach hold sausage. Coach is
sausage.

Warren sags.

COACH PHIL

He's a good coach, and I am too. We
teach fun and fundamentals at our
club.

COACH WARREN

C'mon, Phil. Don't take it
personal.

COACH PHIL

Don't take it personal?

COACH WARREN

(quietly to Phil)

You're arguing with Ivankiv
Romanets. He took fourth in the
world. He could kill you, man.

Phil frowns.

The referee beckons Yuri to the mat. It's his time to
wrestle.

Coach Phil turns to Yuri and shouts.

COACH PHIL

Yuri, don't try any of those
throws. Just do the things I've
been telling you. Keep your head
up. Shoot for the legs. Don't reach
back. Do that and you'll win.

The Ukrainians shout counter instructions.

PAVLO

Yuri, you do what we teach you.
Borotysya! Blockuvanny! Kynuty!

Coach Warren sets Yuri's hot dog and action figure on the
scorer's table.

Yuri walks slowly out to the center of the mat. His OPPONENT,
9, is a boy of roughly the same size and physique.

Yuri looks determined. He pounds his chest, ready to throw.

Phil Warren, Pavlo, and Ivankiv all shout at him with
intensity.

COACH PHIL

Do what we taught you, Yuri.

PAVLO

(countering)

Do as we say.

Yuri shakes hands with his opponent, but then waves his hand at the referee.

Yuri reaches into his singlet and pulls out a half-eaten chocolate bar.

COACH PHIL

Why's he got a chocolate bar in his singlet?

Yuri runs over and gives the candy bar to Coach Warren. Then he goes back to start his match.

Pavlo vibrates with excitement on the side of the mat.

PAVLO

Borotysya! Blockuvanny! Kynuty!

The referee blows the whistle. The match starts--

--and then it ends.

Poor Yuri falls to his back like a sack of potatoes and is pinned in six seconds.

Phil groans. Pavlo pulls his hair.

The opponent gets his arm raised in the air.

Pavlo approaches Phil.

PAVLO

You train him harder.

COACH PHIL

Don't show him moves he can't do.

Yuri slips by the arguing adults. He is unconcerned with their bickering.

He retrieves his hot dog and action figure from the scorers table. He takes a big bite, smiling happily, getting mustard all over his face.

He pretends his action figure is flying.

He and the plastic figure zoom off, away from all of the adults.

FADE OUT:

THE END