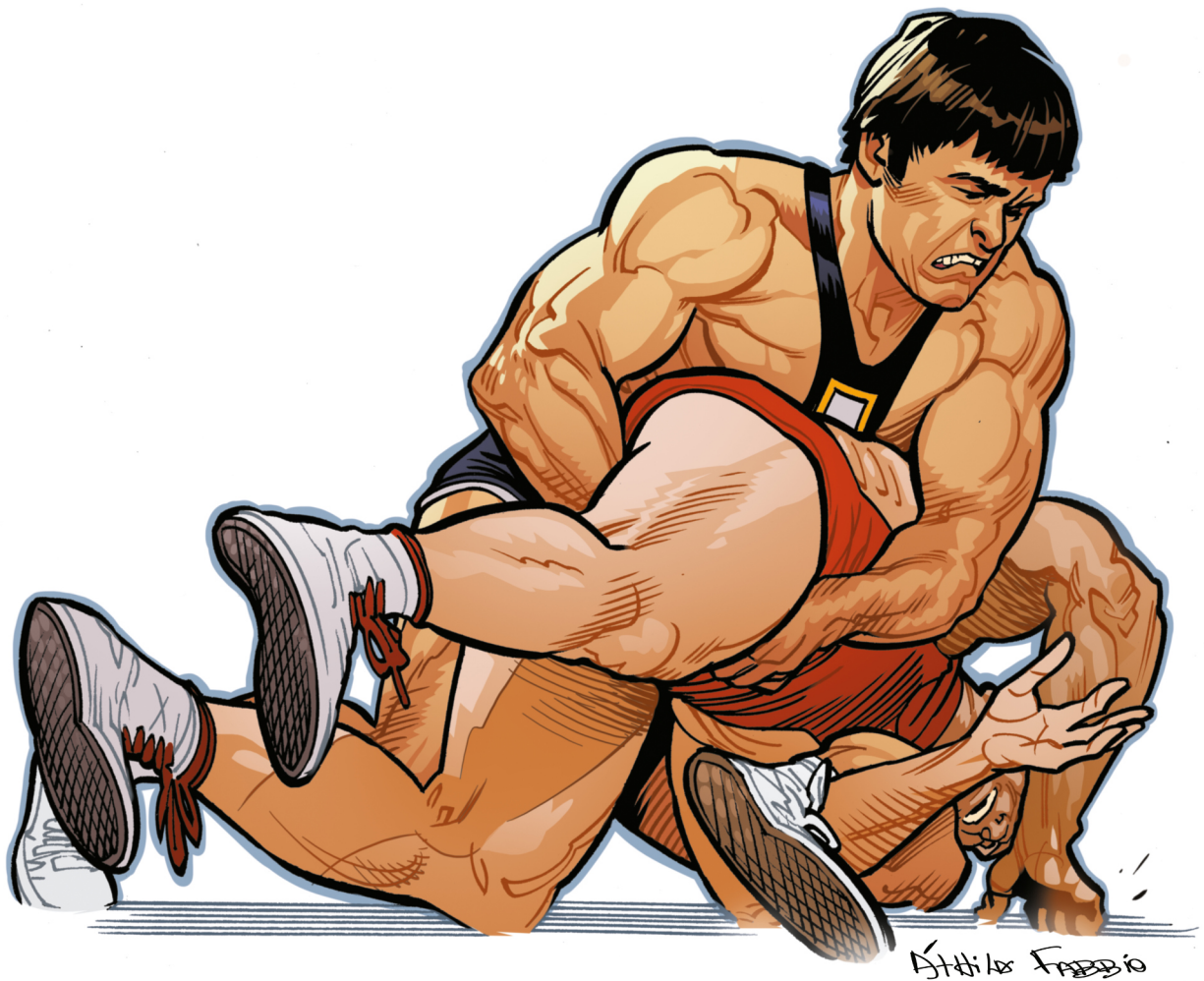


The Children's Bible and the Soviet Wrestler

A missionary story



Title: *The Children's Bible and the Soviet Wrestler: A missionary story*

The story is taken from the book *Called to Missions: Ordinary people devoting their lives to serve among the persecuted church* by Eva Wonka Lopes de Andrade and adapted for elementary-aged children.

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Eva Wonka



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"Grab your Bible, son! It's time for a bedtime story," John called out to his son.

Back in 1984, John took his six-year-old son, John Mark, to a wrestling camp. They stayed for two weeks in a city called Kosice, which was far away in a place called Czechoslovakia, near Hungary and Ukraine. John was there to practice wrestling with athletes from all over Europe.

Every night before John tucked his son into bed, he read a bedtime story to him. They had a special children's Bible with them, and they read from it every night, just like they did at home.

Traveling with his son made crossing borders easier. The officers were always friendly when they saw little John Mark. Even the toughest guards couldn't resist a smile when they saw kids.

There was another great thing about having his son with him. It sometimes made it easier to talk about God in places where they had to be careful about discussing their faith.

One night, John Mark jumped onto his dad's lap, and they opened their illustrated Bible to where they had left off the night before. "Please, Daddy, read!" John Mark said excitedly.

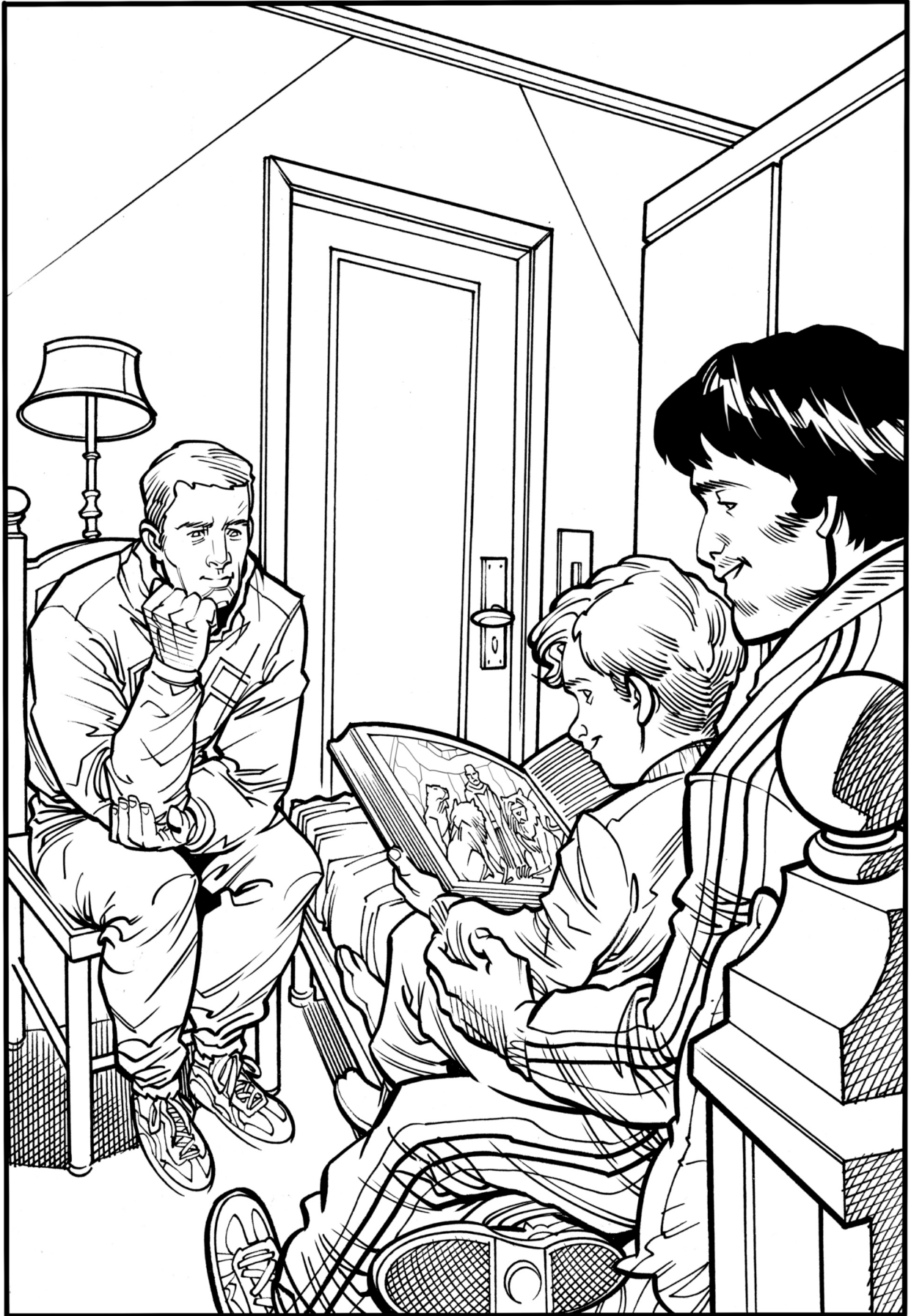
It was a special time for both of them. John Mark loved cuddling in his dad's strong arms and having him all to himself.

Just as John started to read the story aloud there was a faint knock at the door. It was slightly ajar, and the person passing by had heard their voices.

"Who is it?" John Mark wondered.

"Come in!" John called. It could only be one of the wrestlers from the camp.

Indeed it was one of them. A familiar face came through the door. It was George, one of the Soviet wrestlers. He had been working out with John's team earlier that day.



"Excuse me," George said. "I heard you reading. Can I listen?"

"Of course! Have a seat." John pulled an empty chair closer to the bed. With the Bible still in his hands, he sat with John Mark. But before John could continue, George started asking questions.

"Are you reading the Bible?" he asked as he curiously peered over to the open pages.

"Yes, we are. Do you want to take a look?" John showed him the Bible. "It's my son's Bible. It has some pictures in it."

George looked through the book, stopping at pictures of famous Bible stories. He seemed interested. John wondered if George had ever heard about Jesus.

When George reached the picture of Daniel and the lions, he stopped. "Is this really true?" he asked. "Did this really happen?"

"Yes, it really happened," John said. And before he could say more, George asked another question.

"Can you tell me more about Daniel?"

So John told him how Daniel loved and trusted God. He was taken to a different country to serve a king, and some mean people tried to get him in trouble. They made a rule that everyone had to pray only to the king, but Daniel kept praying to God. The mean people caught him and threw him into a den of lions, but God saved him.

George listened carefully. He liked the story.

"George, do you want a Bible to keep?" John asked. He always carried extra Bibles to share.

"Yes, I would like one, but I can't take it with me," George said sadly. "If the guards find it at the border, I will not be able to go to any more training camps like this one ever again. They will not let me compete outside of my country anymore."

That was bad news! But John understood the risk.

Then George suggested, "I can read it while we are here at camp."

John was happy. He gave George a small New Testament from his bag.

"Thank you!" George said, and he left to read his own bedtime story.

Later, John and John Mark finished their story and prayed, thanking God for the chance to share His word with George.

A few days later, John asked George how he was doing with the New Testament. George had already read a lot!

At the end of camp, John's team was wrestling against the Soviet

team in one of the training sessions. George walked over to John with a smile on his face. "You know, John," he said, "you told me that story about Daniel and how God saved him. I have been thinking about something. If I bring this Bible back with me, do you think God can make the guards not see it?"

John thought about it and replied, "God can do anything, George. He might protect you like He protected Daniel."

George nodded, understanding. Then he decided to take the Bible home, even though it was risky.

John and his team prayed for George's safe journey home with the Bible. And John Mark prayed for him, too.

A month later, John heard good news: George had made it home safely with the Bible! John was so happy and thanked God.

George continued reading the Bible and eventually became a follower of Jesus. He shared his faith with many other wrestlers.