

A Strange Wrestling Match

There was once a wrestler called Vijay Singh. A tall man with massive shoulders and muscular arms, he **towered** over others like a giant. Vijay Singh, people said, was a born wrestler and could beat all other wrestlers in the world.



This pahalwan had but one **shortcoming** which **often landed** him in **awkward** situations. He was **fond** of **boasting**. One day, he was sitting in the market-place surrounded by several young men. After drinking many glasses of milk, he suddenly **proclaimed**, “Why are people afraid of ghosts? I am not. I wish I met a **stout** ghost. I’d teach him a lesson.”

There were **murmurs** of **applause** as well as **apprehension** among the young men. “If you walk alone at night through the **Haunted Desert**,” one of them said, “you are sure to meet ghosts. They **roam** there freely. **Strange shrieks** and **moans** can be heard all over the place. Travellers have been **looted** and killed. Would you really want to go there?” Vijay Singh’s **mighty heart missed a beat** or two. Why did he have to boast? “Yes, I have heard of the Haunted Desert,” he said **nonchalantly**. “I think it’s just a **fairy tale**.”



“Oh no,” said one of his **admirers**, “it’s true. This place is ten miles to the west on the road to Jaisalmer. The **landmark** is an ugly black rock that looks like the head of a camel. Beyond that there is nothing but sand and **wilderness** and, of course, ghosts.”

Almost the entire village **turned up** that evening to **bid farewell** to Vijay Singh, who was ready to **set out** west. Just then an old woman came forward and **thrust** a small packet into his hands, and Vijay Singh started walking into the red sunset of the desert.

As he walked, the night **deepened**. The moon was bright and the stars **shone** clearly in the Rajasthan sky. Still a few miles short of his destination, Vijay Singh remembered the old woman’s packet. He opened it and found nothing but a **lump** of salt and an egg. The old woman was well-known for her **eccentricities**.

As Vijay Singh stepped into the Haunted Desert, he heard a voice. “Vijay Singh, Vijay Singh! You will get lost in the desert. Come this way. I am your friend, Natwar.” At once Vijay Singh realised it was not his friend but a ghost. Trying to sound brave, he called back, “Where are you, my dear

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Natwar? It's dark and I cannot see you. Come here and show me the way." Like all good wrestlers, Vijay Singh wanted to **size up** his enemy.

Soon the ghost appeared at his side. Vijay Singh **peered into** his face and declared, "You are just a plain, **lying** ghost. Anyway, now I don't have to walk all night. I was **longing** to meet you." Not used to insults, the ghost was **taken aback**. People generally started back in horror when they met him. They often **fainted**. But here was this unfeeling creature claiming he wanted to meet a ghost. It didn't make sense.



"Really, I don't know why you longed to meet me," the ghost said.

"That proves," said Vijay Singh in a bored voice, "that you are a stupid ghost. The least a ghost can do is to read a man's thoughts. However, a worthless ghost like you is better than no ghost. The fact is, I am tired of wrestling with men. I want to fight a ghost".

The ghost was speechless. **Marshalling** his ghostly **wits**, he made an attempt to look Vijay Singh **scornfully** in the eye. "Frankly," he said, "you don't appear all that strong to me."

"Appearances can be **deceptive**," Vijay Singh said. "Take your own case. You claim to be Natwar, though actually you are a **rascal** of a ghost. If you doubt my strength, let me give you a **demonstration** of it."

(To be continued.....)

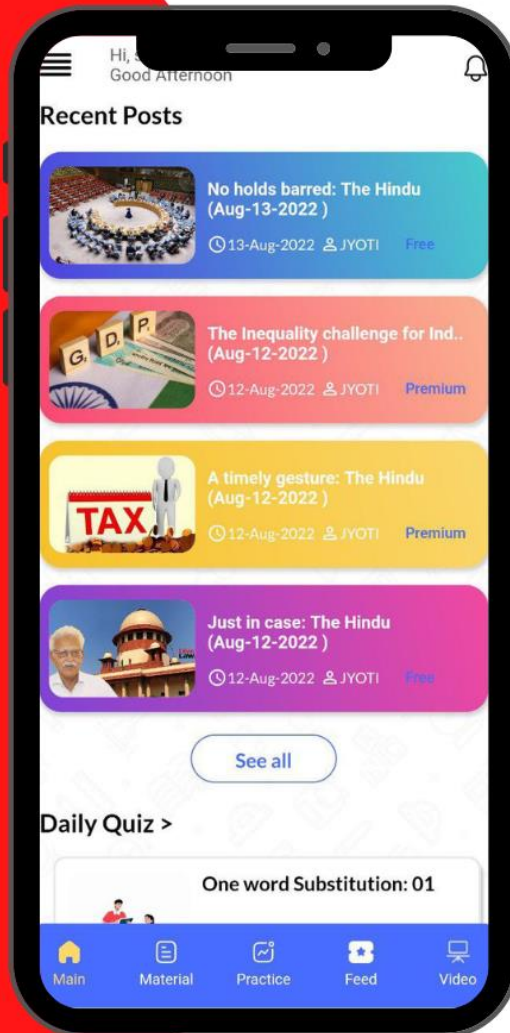
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Vocabulary

1. **Tower over someone** (phrasal verb) – to be very tall in comparison with someone or something else
2. **Shortcoming** (noun) – flaw, fault, defect, failing, weakness कमी
3. **Often** (adverb) – frequently, much, many times, repeatedly, usually अक्सर
4. **Land** (verb) – cause someone to be in a difficult or unwelcome situation (मुसीबत) में डालना
5. **Awkward** (adjective) – clumsy, difficult, uncomfortable, inept, gauche अटपटा
6. **Fond** (of) (adjective) – Having or displaying warmth or affection प्रिय, शौकीन
7. **Boasting** (noun) – Boastfulness, Self-aggrandizement, Showing off शेखी
8. **Proclaim** (verb) – declare, announce, broadcast, assert, state घोषणा करना
9. **Stout** (adjective) – strong, sturdy तगड़ा, मज़बूत
10. **Murmur** (noun) – Speak softly or indistinctly बड़बड़ाना
11. **Applause** (noun) – acclaim, praise, acclamation, commendation वाहवाही
12. **Apprehension** (noun) – fear, anxiety, worry, trepidation, misgiving शंका, डर
13. **Haunted** (adjective) – scary, ghostly, भुतहा
14. **Roam** (verb) – Move about aimlessly or without any destination, often in search of food or employment इधर-उधर भटकना
15. **Strange** (adjective) – weird, peculiar, unusual, bizarre अजीब
16. **Shriek** (noun) – Screech, Scream, Yell, Cry चीख
17. **Moan** (noun) – Sigh, Groan, Whine, Whimper, Sob, Lament कराह
18. **Loot** (verb) – Goods or money obtained illegally लूटना
19. **Mighty** (adjective) – powerful, enormous, strong, huge, tremendous पराक्रमी
20. **Heart miss a beat** (phrase) – used to say that someone is suddenly very surprised, excited, or nervous about something
21. **Nonchalantly** (adverb) – casually, indifferently, calmly, carelessly निश्चिंततापूर्वक
22. **Fairy tale** (noun) – An interesting but highly implausible story परियों की कहानी

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23. **Admirer** (noun) – Fan, Devotee, Follower, Lover Aficionado प्रशंसक
24. **Landmark** (noun) – The position of a prominent or well-known object in a particular landscape सीमा चिन्ह
25. **Wilderness** (noun) – wasteland, desert, wild, wilds, bush जंगल, बियाबान
26. **Turn up** (phrasal verb) – show up, appear, arrive, come, आना
27. **Bid farewell** (phrase) – say goodbye विदाई देने
28. **Set out** (phrasal verb) – Take the first step or steps in carrying out an action प्रस्थान करना
29. **Thrust into** (phrasal verb) – force someone to do or accept something. थमाना
30. **Deepen** (verb) – Make more intense, stronger, or more marked गहरा होना
31. **Shine** (verb) – gleam, glow, glitter, sparkle, glint चमकना
32. **Lump** (noun) – a piece of something solid of any size or shape ढेला, डला
33. **Eccentricity** (noun) – peculiarity, idiosyncrasy, oddity, singularity, strangeness सनक
34. **Size up** (phrasal verb) – evaluate, scrutinize, appraise, assess, examine परखना
35. **Peer** (verb) – Look searchingly ताकना
36. **Lying** (adjective) – Deceitful, Dishonest, Twofaced कपटी
37. **Longing** (adjective) – Prolonged unfulfilled desire or need चाह
38. **Take aback** (phrase) – Surprise greatly; knock someone's socks off हैरान रह जाना
39. **Faint** (verb) – Collapse, Pass out, Black out, Fall unconscious, Fall in a faint, Fall down, Lose consciousness बेहोश हो जाना
40. **Marshal** (verb) – To combine things together क्रमबद्ध करना, एकत्र करना
41. **Wits** (noun) – Intelligence or mental ability बुद्धि
42. **Scornfully** (adverb) – Without respect; in a disdainful manner तिरस्कार से
43. **Deceptive** (adjective) – deceitful, false, misleading, fraudulent, dishonest भ्रामक
44. **Rascal** (noun) – One who is playfully mischievous दुष्ट
45. **Demonstration** (noun) – A show or display; the act of presenting something to sight or view प्रदर्शन



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