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## The Warrior

by Richard Rewell

I've always had a fear of being small and ordinary. And that fear has never quite left me. Allow me to tell you my story. I was eleven when they came and took me and other boys from our families and homeland. Our new masters took us across the great ocean to a land they called Iberia and not the old empire, Rome where my grandparents had come from.

"One day you will go there. To Rome. But not yet" said my teacher. "You must train and work at your skills. For if you succeed, in this chosen path then glory and riches will be bestowed upon you. You will be free to do whatever you want."

I trained every day perfecting my skills, except upon the sabbath and at the times of the Christian festivals. It was a long tough journey of six years and upon which I stared eye to eye with failure and defeat on numerous occasions, but I made it and have enjoyed the wealth and fame that was promised me.

So, as I speak to you right at this moment, my heart rushes with a mixture of fear and excitement. I gently flex the muscles around my neck and twist my head from side to side as do the other warriors around me. Each one of us glisten in the oils applied upon us by our trainers. And then we hear the crowd in the arena.

I bend my knees. One clicks, but it is nothing. An old wound inflicted long ago. I listen to the crowd. Has it got louder?

“Go” shouts the marshal behind us and we march forward upon the marble floor as the screams and shouts from the masses in the arena clearly get louder at every pace we take along the corridor.

I feel sick, there is no bucket. A warrior in the line next to me falls to his knees, vomits then stands and shouts a defiance. We follow his example and shout our own war cries in the language of our respective homelands.

I think about what I have been told. Victory is everything. Wealth and fortune. Defeat is banishment and shame. We must win. I must win!

A hot sun smothers me as I enter the amphitheatre, it is difficult to breath and the roar from the hoards now surrounding me assaults my ears and I begin to feel sick again. But then I smile. They shout my name and I raise an arm in salutation firstly to my left, my right, then behind and in front of me. I am their hero. I am a god some say. I feel good now. I am ready for the battle. And I will not be beaten.

I’ve always had a fear of being small and ordinary. Well I am small. But I am not ordinary. Not now. Because I am Lionel Messi.