

The Two Elephants (Sulwan Al-Muta'a fi 'Udwan al-Atba')

The story of the two elephants tells of a wild and a tame elephant. One day, the wild elephant was captured and put in the same enclosure as the tame elephant. The tame elephant convinced his wild cousin to submit quietly, saying that his captors only wished to look after him by feeding him, watering him, and dressing him in silks for public parades. The wild elephant believed the words of the tame elephant, and submitted willingly to his captors. Sure enough, he was soon washed, fed, and dressed for a parade. However, he was also laden with a *howdah* full of armed warriors, and had weapons fixed to his tusks and trunk. He asked the tame elephant what was happening – and came to understand that he was being treated so well because he was expected to suffer and even die in battle. He told the tame elephant that he was wrong to convince him to give up his liberty, and that the comforts did not outweigh the risks and burdens of battle. The tame elephant, realising his mistake, devised a plan for them both to escape. Pretending to be sick, the two elephants were released into a beautiful pasture for treatment and recovery. Unwatched, they were able to flee together to freedom - more valuable to them with all of its hardships than a life of comfortable captivity.