



CARLOTA, THE STRONG

Once upon a time, in a land far, far away, there was a girl whose name was Carlota. One day she was crowned queen, and to celebrate it, she threw a wonderful party, inviting all her subjects to come and eat chocolate cake and dance late into the night. Queen Carlota was cheerful and funny and very intelligent. Everybody knew that.

What nobody knew was that she was also very, very strong. So strong that with only one arm, she could lift a tower with twenty elephants on top of it. There was no one to match her.

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One day, from over the mountains, came a deafening roar. Flames filled the sky, and suddenly, a terrible monster appeared. He was horrible to look at, and smelt as bad as a thousand rotten eggs. His face was twisted into a scowl, and it was clear that his intentions were not exactly good ones.

The people gathered in the castle. There were all very scared! "What shall we do?" they asked. "We're frightened," they cried. But Queen Carlota didn't seem the slightest bit bothered. Without a moment's hesitation, she marched out to face the monster and said: "You've no business being here monster. I suggest you go and cause trouble somewhere else. Take my advice, or it won't be nice."

The monster was not used to people standing up to him. He was so surprised that he turned round and went off to take a dip in a frozen lake, to see if the icy water would cool his terrible rage. But unluckily for him, he caught an absolute stinker of a cold.

The next day, the monster returned to the castle with his ferocious roars, his fiery breath, and a stuffed up nose, because of the cold. He looked even scarier than the previous day, if that's even possible. The people were beside themselves with fear, and crowded into the castle. "He's back," said one. "We'll never get rid of him!" said another. "He'll turn us into sausages," said a third.

Queen Carlota stepped out onto the balcony and calmed them. "Don't worry, I'll talk to him again. I'll deal with him, you'll see." And cool as a cucumber, she marched up to the monster and said to him: "I'm not going to tell you again, leave us alone. There's nothing for you here, believe me. Take my advice, or it won't be nice."

The monster was disconcerted, which means he didn't know what to do. This brave and determined little queen was making him so angry! To calm his fury, he went off to have a nap. But unluckily for him, a great gale blew up and blew him far away over the mountains.

The next day, the monster was spitting flames of anger. He put on his magic boots to get to the castle as quickly as possible, and to spur himself on he said: "It's now or never. By all the twists in my terrible tail, I swear I'm going to eat everyone in the kingdom today!"

But what do you know, quite by chance, he bumped into Queen Carlota, who had just been for a walk in the forest. As soon as she saw him, she sighed. "Here we go again... Can't you see we don't want you around? Since you wouldn't listen to me, you leave me no choice but to throw you out once and for all." And saying this, Queen Carlota hurled him into the highest cloud in the sky.

Queen Carlota called all her subjects to the castle square and told them that she'd finally got rid of the monster for ever. The people asked how she'd done it, but she wouldn't be drawn into explanations. Queen Carlota was rather shy, and cautious – very cautious, and she didn't want the people to know how strong she was. She preferred to keep the secret to herself.

To celebrate the fact that the monster would never bother them again, she threw a party that was as dazzling and delightful as her coronation. Everyone congratulated her, and said how good she was at getting a job done. They said to her, "You're a fine queen, Carlota, a fine queen."

And to commemorate the way the queen had chased away such an terrifying enemy, on the kingdom's coat of arms, they put a monster on a cloud. They also wrote the Queen's name: Carlota. Do you know what it means? In the old Germanic languages it meant 'very, very strong.' In other words, a strong woman.

Queen Carlota was a wise ruler who was loved by all her subjects. From time to time, she went to visit the monster on his cloud, and they spent hours chatting. She taught him good manners, and how to speak nicely to people. The monster was grateful for the lessons, because he'd realized that it was no use going round the world threatening people and being horrible. Whether you're taming monsters, or chasing away spooks, or trying to persuade a good friend, the most powerful tools / are words.

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