

# “Carrot Stick”

By

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I decided to take up running after much insistence from my wife. It was true that I had been living a sedentary life. As an independent translator, I worked from home, sometimes for 12+ hours non-stop, with very regular visits to the kitchen, and none to the family’s treadmill.

First week was problematic. Weighing over 120 kilos, 25 more than I should, I knew, without needing any crazy formulas or nutritionists pinching my love-handles, that I was in trouble!

Eating right, sleeping right, and making it my absolute religion to get up at five in the morning to run, began to pay off by the third week. I felt lighter, and decided to run the entire length of the bike track touring through our small town, enjoying the most beautiful scenery of the “cerrado” vegetation all around me.

By 5:15 A.M., the first rays of light would announce the Sun, and by 5:30, they would sting, warning it would be scorching people in a few hours. It was my favorite period to run, because it was cool, calm, and I could jog like a turtle for the first 30 minutes or so, without many people seeing me drag my exhausted ass back home. Until something, or should I say, someone, changed everything!

I first saw her running ahead of me in my third week. It was still dark so I couldn’t really see much else besides her silhouette. But what really remained imprinted in my mind was her perfume. I was soon pushing hard to keep up, always getting close, but never enough to see anything else but her back, and to smell her perfume.

This strange muse showed up in my running life every day, appearing out of nowhere, always staying ahead of me. Yes! She became my running muse, and I didn't even know what she looked like.

It took me almost a week to manage to get close enough to see her better, the brand of her running shoes, her running suit, see the highlights of her long auburn ponytail swinging from side to side, following an almost hypnotizing, synchronous motion with her graceful bouncing strides; in gross contrast to my tired, noisy, mouth-breathing, and thumping.

Slender legs, broad shoulders like those of a swimmer, unmistakably feminine hips, and a very attractive, perfectly shaped behind. She was the personification of what I thought an amazon would be in terms of fitness, from behind at least.

Who was this woman? Where was she from? What was she doing in my town? What did she look like? Could she perhaps be thinking I was some kind of pervert? How would she feel if I did catch up to her one day, to thank her for being my "carrot stick?"

Well! To hell with it! I wasn't doing anything wrong. I was just trying to run, and she kept running in front of me! And I just wanted to say hello! So the next day I was going to borrow a bike and catch up to her, and make conversation! Maybe I could get her to befriend my wife and encourage her to run too. She was already feeling bad about me looking all fit and sexy for her, while she was still struggling to lose what she had put on after having our second child.

So the next morning, when my wife caught me leaving the house with my 12-year-old's bike, we had a very strange conversation.

It went like this:

“Where to, honey?” She managed to ask after a very long yawn. She also measured me and the bike, pretending it was natural for such a big man to ride such a little bike.

“Going for my morning run.” I said, feeling absurdly stupid, and yawning back.

I saw her roll her eyes, then turn around to head back to our bedroom.

From the bedroom, she said:

*“I PAID HER TO RUN FOR A MONTH, TO KEEP YOU MOTIVATED.*

*SHE CALLED YESTERDAY. SAID YOU’VE ALMOST MATCHED HER BEST SPEED. SO I GUESS HER JOB IS DONE.”*

She let it sink in for a few minutes, enjoying the silence. When she figured I was still where she’d left me, bike in hand, unable to pick my jaw up from the floor, she must have felt sorry. She even sounded apologetic when she said:

“It is Sunday, baby! Come back to bed! I PROMISE TO HIRE SOMEONE WITH A BIKE TOMORROW, FOR YOU TO PLAY CATCH WITH!”

End of story!