

The Price of Silence

Palermo, Italy, the 1990s

Ginevra's mother had made breakfast and called everyone to the table. Dad muttered, "Good morning," pecked her on the cheek, and buried his face in the newspaper like always. Some pop diva was singing cheerfully on the radio, and the spring morning promised to be simply lovely.

— Ginevra, you'll be late for school, hurry up! — her mother sang out. No answer came.

Frowning, she quickly went up to the girl's room, opened the door — and saw her daughter.

Ginevra was curled up on the bed, hugging herself.

She was visibly shaking with terror, and the sheets were soaked in urine and feces.

— Ginevra, what's wrong?! Baby, what happened?! — Her mother rushed to her.

— Did you have a nightmare? — she whispered, hugging her, sitting beside her, brushing the wet hair from her face...

And then she saw the girl's eyes. Her eyes. The whites weren't white — they had turned red. The blood vessels had burst — as if the terror inside her was so strong it needed a way out and found it in the mirror of the soul. The mother didn't scream — she just exhaled slowly, as if something had cracked inside her.

Dad's fingers were trembling as he dialed the emergency number. Shock and confusion were plain on his pale face. There had never been any room for horror in their little family idyll. They weren't prepared for something truly bad to happen.

At the hospital, the doctor examined the child and referred her to neurology.

— This looks more like a massive trauma from fear. But... no one gets that terrified from a regular dream, — he added, more quietly.

— She hasn't said a single word since that morning... — Ginevra's mother whispered. — We don't know who... or what... did this to her.

Then came the doctors. The tests.

Expensive treatments were prescribed. But the child stayed silent, apathetic — indifferent to the world around her.

Time passed, but nothing changed.

The girl stared at the floor and kept silent.

Only let out quiet sobs from time to time...

And in her inflamed, young eyes — was the horror that had shattered her world to pieces.

"So why did I even pay attention to her out on the street?" — Ginevra thought.

"Why did I speak to her first?"

Why did I ask: 'Why are you so quiet? Are you mute or something?'"

And the strangest part was — no one else saw that "girl" but Ginevra.

Her friends joked: "You've got an imaginary friend, haha."

She looked like a child at first glance,

but after staring from a distance, Ginevra realized — it was something else.

Not a child. Some entity pretending to be.

Head down, eyes to the ground, in some weird clothes — and it started following her everywhere, always from afar.

— Stop following me! — Ginevra shouted. — Get away from me, you freak!!!

The entity took one step closer.

— Don't come any closer!!!

It stepped forward again.
Ginevra was terrified for real.
— Stay back, you mute freak!
The entity moved again — closer — and lifted its head.

It was now two meters away.
Its eyes bulged — wide and white like in suffocation — tiny black pupils locked onto her.
And then it started convulsively chewing on its own tongue. Staring directly at the girl.
Black, rancid blood poured from its mouth, with wet, revolting smacks and squelches.
Ginevra fled home like a frightened bird, not looking back even once.

Her parents weren't home. But she wasn't as scared now. She peeked out the window — nothing there. Felt a bit better.
Did her homework, microwaved some pizza, ate, brushed her teeth, and went to bed.
Her parents had promised to be home by dinner, but adults always had stuff to do.
She was twelve — old enough to be alone, and not afraid of the dark anymore.
What she saw today already felt like a fading bad dream.
Ginevra fell asleep easily.

She didn't see the entity standing behind the curtain in her room.

In the morning, as she woke up, she smiled out the window and said her usual:
— Good morning!
And then that thing behind the curtain, with its chomping and its foul breath, oozing rotten blood from its mouth, jumped onto the bed and came right up to her.
That's when Ginevra finally understood what was happening.

A month had passed since the entity latched onto the child.
Then, one morning, during breakfast, Ginevra came into the kitchen on her own. She walked slowly toward her parents.

Dad folded his newspaper. Mom froze mid-motion.

The girl approached. She hugged them both.
— I love you, — she whispered. — And I'm so scared...

Mom burst into tears. Dad stood up and pulled her in.
— Baby... sweetheart... you're back... you're back with us...

But in the next instant, her gentle girl's face twisted into something horrific. Her eyes popped out.
She arched with a choking groan, and her whole body began to twitch in grotesque convulsions — bones snapping, joints dislocating and bending backwards.
Foam poured from her mouth — then blood. She convulsed, trying to say something — but she couldn't.

By the time the ambulance arrived, Ginevra was dead. Right there in their arms.
Her parents never knew: The price of silence was her life.

And that the entity drew closer with every word she ever spoke.

END

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