

## UNDER THE BED

Ottawa, Canada, 1980s.

"There's nothing there," the parents snapped again. They were tired of her tantrums.

"But how can that be?" Diana thought. "They are there... under the bed, in the closet, in the flicker of light, when you look at yourself in the mirror..."

Diana felt, instead of her parents' love – only dull irritation and regret.

She heard everything – her parents arguing loudly in the kitchen again. She was afraid to be alone at night – in this house of shouting, where love no longer kept them bound together.

And when these feelings – like childhood fear, guilt, rejection – have nowhere to go, they become like a wound through which something else seeps in. It crawls in, growing stronger, ready to drag you where no imagination reaches, where no one will hear. Or find you. Or save you – while they drink your soul alive.

Diana trembled under the blanket – it had become her shield.

Something that still gave her a sense of safety, separating her from the awful, engulfing fear that came from the one with no name.

She clamped her hands over her mouth and moaned in terror.

Something was scratching under the bed.

Steps – across the empty room where no one was.

"Just fall asleep... Just fall asleep and run away..." Diana whispered.

But her little body shook, and the bed was wet from fear.

And then she understood: That's why older kids wet the bed – not because they're small, but because if you leave the blanket, it's waiting – the one with no name.

When the parents ran in at their daughter's muffled scream, there was no one in the room. The wardrobe was empty. Nothing under the bed. And the only window was sealed for winter.

If they had known how, they could've seen what had stolen (and devoured) their daughter:

To place a mirror at just the right angle – and look into it.

And then they would have understood, that after what what they'd see, you must never turn off the light – and even more so – never sleep in the dark.

THE END

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