

## RUSINELLE'S WINDOW

Oh, You are all here, very well. Let me take a seat. I'll tell you what happened. People... people tell all kinds of stories. I was there. I saw. I heard, and I did what I had to. So, now listen to me. Bells were tolling for the mass. I was making bread. It was so very warm that I widened doors and windows.

Suddenly, I heard Carmine cursing himself.

"Carmine!" I called from the window. "What's happened? Do not talk like that! Come on! What's wrong? We will sort it out!"

"Mother is dead! Mother is dead!" He cried in despair. "Mother died alone! Jesus Christ will not forgive me for that!"

On hearing that I took my apron off and I ran like the wind

Poor Rusinelle lay in bed as she was still living. Well, you know, she had been bedridden for 3 or 4 years, poor thing. She could not speak, she could not move. She just stared at you. But now she had also stopped breathing. She was dead. While Carmine kept shouting "Jesus Christ will not forgive me for that!". And he wept leaning on the sill.

Only then I realised what he meant. the window was shut. It was SHUT. Do you understand? What could I possibly tell him, poor man?

"Jesus Christ forgives everybody" I said.

On that very moment, Jolanda, Clino's wife, entered.

She was passing by, she heard screaming, and came to see what was going on. She was sorry about Rusinelle. Very sorry she was.

And then she asked me: "Why is Carmine saying that Jesus will not forgive him?"

Jolande is a newcomer, so she could not possibly know. Of course not.

And I explained.

"Just before somebody dies, a window in the room must be open. If the window is kept shut their soul cannot rise to heaven, It gets trapped in, and the devil comes and try to get it."

"Are you serious?" she asked me "Absolutely!" I said "Souls should not get trapped in this world. That is too bad."

Then, Jolanda went for the priest, but he was celebrating the Mass. She asked him to hurry but the Mass cannot be rushed and it took some time for him to come. So that while we were waiting, Carmine, keeping weeping, told me:

“This morning mother was...well, you know, she looked as usual and I went to work. Now, while I was watering the vineyard I heard a crow caw. I turned round and I saw the bird sitting on the roof.

At first, I did not pay attention, but after a while I thought: When ever one of these creatures flew over my house? These creatures announcing death?

I felt a pang, I dropped everything and ran home, but for how long mother had been dead only God knows, God and the devil! It is my fault! Jesus will not forgive me!”

He kept weeping bitterly, poor man. So I said to him

“My son, but how could he foresee that right today, right on that moment...You yourself just said that everything looked as usual.”

but he was so upset that I doubt he heard me.

Finally, the priest came, and Rusinelle’s relatives after him.

So, we have to prepare Consolo for all those people. Rusinelle had many relatives.

It turned out to be a large mourning lunch. Jolanda helped me. Carmine is a widower, and his daughter is just a child. A mourning lunch is women’s stuff.

We did everything according to the book. Nothing was missing. There were spring water, wine, broad beans, wheat, and, of course, chickpeas.

Dead flesh turns into soil for chickpeas, so they have to be eaten.

More food was brought by relatives: fresh cheese, bread, egg fresh pasta.

Everything was properly done.

While we were eating I looked round and asked:

“Carmine we all are here. Who is waking your mother?”

“My daughter” he said

I could not believe that.

“Carmine!” I cried “have you out of your mind? Get the girl out of that room immediately! You know that the Devil might come, you were in despair because of that, and you leave your daughter at his mercy? Did sorrow drive you mad? Children and youngsters must not stay in any place where the Devil might be. Only the old ones can. The Devil never harm them. If he had wanted, he would have already done it!

I will wake Rusinelle from now all night long!”

And so I did. I do not fear the Devil. I am old, and I know what to do.

When you wake a dead person, you have to pray for them first, and then you have to say a special prayer so that if you fall asleep and the Devil comes, he has no power over you.

I LIE IN BED  
WITH A PERFECT ANGEL  
AN ANGEL OF GOD  
WITH JESUS CHRIST

THE HOLY VIRGIN IS MY MOTHER  
ST. JOHN IS MY FATHER  
ALL SAINTS ARE MY RELATIVES  
I TRUST IN THEM WITH NO DOUBT  
STAY BACK BLACK FACE  
BECAUSE I SLEEP WITH GOD  
WITH HOLY GOD

IN THE NAME OF THE FATHER, OF THE SON, AND THE HOLY SPIRIT.

Say that, and nothing bad will happen to you.

The following day we got Rusinelle ready to leave. We put a white handkerchief in her hand to wipe her face clean in the moment to meet God. Then we put a coin in her mouth pay for the journey, and new shoes for her walk to the afterlife. Carmine bought them. Paolone, that dump man, said to him: "Put her on an old pair shoes, clean them properly and you will save money."

Carmine was about to hit him. Are you joking? Misbehave to the dead? They come back to you at night! (to reproach you) But Paolone is a good for nothing. He just talks through his hat. Better to ignore him.

Then, we waited for Rusinelle's sister and daughter who live very far to come and sing the Repote. (Lamentation)

Repote is not much in use nowadays but they did it, and it was very touching. I have not recollection of such a moving lamentation

The daughter made us cry.

*Oh, Mum, my good mum, what shall I do?*

*What shall I do, mum?*

*How can I get back to your place?*

*Forgive me for what I did to you, mum*

*What shall I do, mum?*

*Pray God from the Other world*

*Come, and talk to me*

*Pray God for Carmine, mum*

*Pray God for this daughter or yours*

*My good mum, what shall I do?*

Her sister then, remembered everybody in her lamentation

*Sister, my good sister*

*How much we loved you*

*Sister*

*My Rusinelle*

*Pray God for mum,*

*My Rusinelle*

*Pray God for Carmine*

*Pray God for dad*

*Sister,*

*My Rusinelle*

*Pray God for everybody*

*Pray God for all your friends*

*My Rusinelle,*

*Pry God for this sister of yours*

*My sister.*

*My good sister*

After that, we nailed the coffin and took it to the church, and to the cemetery.

But from that day Carmine was not the same anymore. I know him well.

He did not answer if you talked to him; he did not work properly anymore.

“He cannot rest” I said to myself.

And, as a matter of fact, everyday he went to the cemetery to bring a candle to his mother’s tomb. Every day, no matter the weather. He did that because if Rusinelle’s soul was trapped and wandering in this world, guided by the light of the candle she could find the way to her grave and rest a bit.

Every given day, no matter what, he brought a candle to her. He lost his sleep. I saw him being born. I could not see him like that.

And then, an idea crossed my mind. There was something I could do about it. But I had to wait for months. Rusinelle died on Assumption day. In August. I had to wait for All Saints day.

The day of weeping leaves.

It is a very sad say. Because you think of the dead ones? Not exactly. Bad people die too, and to lose what is bad is always a bargain. But to lose the good ones, that is a reason to weep, because there is nothing you can do about it.

Though you do not want to think about, so many things get back into your mind that day. You cannot help it. The sky is dark, the land is dark. Leaves fall one by one.

They weep along the way  
and a song echoes within the heart  
like a sorrowful hail, like a farewell  
to many beautiful things that die  
to many dear bong that untie.  
Among weeping leaves  
my love let me sing softly.

At nightfall I dressed in mourning and I went out.

Eh, I know, that is not night to go around, but what must be done, must be done, and without telling anybody, because if you talk about it, you will not do it.

The following day, when I told Carmine, he got scared. But I said, “Do not be. Do you remember what I said the day your mother died? I said: ‘We will sort it out. and so be it.

Yesterday night I went out all in black. At midnight I covered my face and said “Teri teri tera the crow is passing by” At that very moment I saw the procession that does not walk. The deads procession

“What if they saw you?” Carmine said. That is why he got scared.

I said “If you cover your face, they can not see you. but I saw them

First come the stillborn babies, then those who died before baptism; after them the young, then adult women and men, and finally the old ones. All with a lit candle in their hand.

The candle of the dead never burns out, that is how you recognise them.

Their procession does not move forward, but they go to the Mass celebrated by a dead priest. That is why on that night the entrance door of the church should remain open. They pray to Jesus to allow them to rise to Heaven.

Carmine, your mother was not among them. Do you hear me? Do you realise what that means?

Rusinelle’s window was closed, but Jesus knows that she was a good Christian.

Little by little, day after day, your mother built her road to Heaven by herself.

She did it either when she was in good health, or even more when she was ill.

All those years she spent bedridden... she did not moan once!

Jesus Christ heard her silence. And He let her rise through the shut window

Not all miracles are to be seen.

Get rid of that thought in you mind, get rid of sorrow in your heart. Do not think about it any longer.

Your mother's soul lives in the Grace of God. So you should yourself.

Get back to work, my son. Prune the vine, otherwise we will have a bad wine next year.

And if you want to do something for your mother, you know what you can do?

Prune the cherry tree.

Do you remember how much she loved the blossom? How delighted she was, looking at it? As happy as a little girl, she was.

Do a good job. Make the tree blossom lavishly; so that she can see it from the Sky and smile on you.

*In memory of Pasqua Rosa (Rosina)*