

## THE VOICE OF SILENCE

(A Story of Toledo)

During one of my visits to the city of Toledo where I often go to find some relief from the daily struggle, this small series of events took place and now, with the help of my imagination, I have transferred them to this white page.

One afternoon I was wandering through the narrow streets of the imperial city with my sketchbook under my arm, when from nearby I heard a voice like an immense sigh that was repeating some vague and confusing words; I stopped and turned around, but to my complete surprise, I found there was no one else in that quiet street. But nevertheless, I definitely had heard a voice, a strange, sad voice that was certainly the voice of a woman who had been speaking a moment ago, just a few steps away from me. I soon became tired of searching for the person who had uttered those confusing words, and since the Angelus had already sounded on the clock of a nearby convent, I decided to return to the inn which was my refuge for the interminable hours of the night.

Once I was alone in my room, with the help the flickering light from a candle, I traced the outline of a woman in my sketchbook.

Two days later, when I had almost forgotten this event, it turned out that, by chance, I found myself in the same place where it had happened. The day was ending, the setting sun had filled the horizon with a red glow, and the clock was striking the hour. My steps were slow, and there was an expression of doubt on my face.

And the same voice disturbed my tranquility once again. This time I decided not to stop until I had found the key to this enigma, and when I was about to conclude that I was not going to find it, in an old house with antique architecture, I saw that there was a small window with a grate that had a strange, fanciful design. It was undoubtedly that window from which the voice of the woman was coming.

It was now completely dark and the sad voice was silent, so I decided to return to the whitewashed walls of my room in the inn, where I lay down on the bed and imagined this fantasy which, unfortunately... can never become a reality.

The following day an old Jewish merchant, who has a hardware shop on the other side of the street from the house where I heard the mysterious voice, told me the house had been uninhabited for a long time. A very beautiful woman used to live there with her husband, a miserly merchant who was much older than she was. One day the merchant left the house locking the door with a key, and since then nothing has been known of him, nor of his beautiful wife. The story has it that since that time, each night the white ghost of a woman wanders through the deserted house, and confusing words which express a mixture of curses and sadness are heard. And the story tells us that this white ghost is the beautiful wife of that miserly merchant.

Beautiful woman's voice like heavenly music, like the sigh of a loving soul, you came to me on air filled with the aromas of spring. What is the secret of your confusing words, of your quiet laments, and your strange and harmonious songs?