

Introduction

The text written below is a Fairytale inspired by a true story which takes place in Rome, Italy. It follows the events around the Castello della Cervelletta in the park of the Valle dell'Aniene. The fairytale starts with a brief introduction on the History of the Castle, which has a long tradition from the Medieval times. The main event described is the fight between the citizens of the suburbs around the Valle dell'Aniene and the municipality of Rome. They fight in order to preserve and protect a natural and cultural heritage, dear to those neighborhoods. All the events described below are fact based, with an adjustment in a narrative style. This style allowed me to work on two different levels: the level of the fact-based events, and the one of the moral and the interpretation of the story through the metaphors. The text is rich in metaphors and figures of speech, which allow me to denounce the injustice perceived by the citizens in this story and the relevance of the social dynamics. The story ends with an imaginary happy-ending. We still don't know how the vicissitude will end in reality, since it's still an ongoing fight.

I decided to keep real names. The suburbs are called "villages" in the story and they have the real names of the quarters in Roma Est. In the story there are Elves, who in the reality are the "Ragazzi del Cinema America", a group of young people who occupied an old Cinema, which was about to be demolished in the central neighborhood of Trastevere¹, few years ago. Since then, they not only kept the Cinema America alive, but brought the cinema to the squares of the city with free access for everybody. The summer of 2018 they've decided to set their screen in front of the Castello della Cervelletta for 54 nights, to draw attention on the fight of the neighborhoods around the Valley. After the summer 2018 the Castello della Cervelletta was first on the list of the places to be preserved, made by FAI (Fondo Ambientale Italiano) in Rome and in its Region, Lazio. On a national level it is now on the 27th position.

In the story, The Municipality has the role of the and the character that embodies the role of the government is the King, who in the reality would be the mayor. From 1980 to today the Municipality has been ignoring the movement of the citizens and and has left the Castello della Cervelletta deteriorate despite the several calls for intervention.

In the fairytale the inhabitants of the villages will write a Manifesto, which is fact-based and contains the projects, throughout the years have been proposed by the Association of the neighborhoods. (The Association is called "Uniti per la Cervelletta". In the story I call them "The Company of the brightness")

Scrolling through their website² it is possible to observe the holistic perspective that the Association has on in the project proposed for the Castle and its valley. They consider not only the cultural and historical heritage of the Castle, but also the environmental value of the park and its educational value for children and adults. Moreover, the Castle is an important point of reference for the neighborhoods all around the park, that are known to be vulnerable and isolated by the rest of the city.

In this fairytale I tried to underline the importance of the bottom-up movements, and how the resilience and the determination of the people in the neighborhoods of Roma Est deserve some attention. These events are an important demonstration of the active citizenship that is needed in order to build a sustainable society, in equality, fairness, participation and freedom.

¹ <https://piccoloamerica.it/>

² <https://unitiperlacervelletta.wordpress.com/info/>

The Company of the Brightness and the Castello della Cervelletta

Once upon a time, there was a Castle. The Castle stood right in the middle of an uncontaminated green valley, "La Valle dell'Aniene", named because of the big river Aniene which ran through the green land. The name of the Castle was Castello della Cervelletta. It had a high tower from where it was possible to observe the people coming and going along the two big roads that led to the city of Rome, Via Collatina and Via Prenestina. The Castle was so beautiful and so special that everybody wanted to own it. First, it was the Ecclesiastic Church who owned it back in 1202 for 400 years; then the important and noble family, Sforza, bought it in the XVI century and kept it for many years. But in 1628 the Borghese family, who were envious about that beautiful Castle, right at the borders of the city and in the middle of a wild green area, bought it and turned the Castle into a Countryside house and added a farm to the building. But the Castello della Cervelletta was becoming every year more beautiful, and the Salviati family could not ignore it, so they decided to buy it in 1835 and extended its land to make it even more suitable for farming. All the families that owned the Castle put a lot of effort in making it every year more beautiful, bigger and functional. At the end, during the 1800s, the Castle had signs of all the owners who passed by the property, from the medieval tower to the elegant courtyard that used to connect the main building with the stalls for the animals of the farm. Moreover, all the families took care of the maintenance of the big gardens, of the Valley and of the land. Looking at the Castle it was possible to enjoy the brightness and the harmony between the wild nature, its animals and the inhabitants of the land. The Castello della Cervelletta was a true source of pride not only for the many owners it had, but also for the inhabitants of the Valley.

But as time passed by, a "Dark Wind of Power", befell on the Valley. And so, the Valle dell' Aniene and the green around the Castle was getting smaller; grey, sad and big buildings were built all around the borders. The grey of the buildings was now covering the brightness of the Castle. The Castle was sold to a company that soon forgot about its treasure...and so the Castello della Cervelletta was abandoned, forgotten in the middle of the woods surrounded by the darkness of the neglected forest. It was no longer possible to see the brightness; the wild animals, scared by the sound of the close buildings, were hiding away in their dens, the harmony was lost and the Castle began to deteriorate.

After many years, the company was no longer interested in having an old, crumbling and decadent property from which it couldn't get any more profit; and the same was for the kingdom of the Valley, which completely forgot about the Castle. As king succeeded king, the Castle became more forgotten by the royal house. But the inhabitants of the Valley never left behind the memory of the Castello della Cervelletta. The story of the Castle was passed down from generation to generation for more than 200 years, remembering every single spark of its past brightness. But nobody dared to go where the Castle was. In the Valley around it, once full of forest, green fields and deer, now, there were hungry people seeking for food, or trading the last coins for some food. A lot of people found themselves obligated to steal food or money to feed their children. With the "Dark Wind", fear, a lot of hunger and an increasing poverty came to the Valley. The laws of the kingdom were really strict, the kings of the Valley were really greedy, and so they kept on raising the taxes every year to buy more horses or more jewelry for themselves.

Even if the Castle had been kept into the hearts of the citizens for decades, the time of the brightness had seemed so far away.

But one day, in 1980, the King declared that the Castle should be demolished so that he could build luxury houses for his friends coming from the far South. That day, a group of citizens from one village of the Valley, called Colli Aniene, gathered together, after having heard about the intentions of the king. They talked and discussed, they argued and talked again for the whole long vernal night. Then, in the morning, they finally came to a conclusion: the brightness must to be restored in the Valley and the Castle should have never been forgotten by anybody. But above all, they would have done everything in their power to hinder the demolition of their beloved Castello della Cervelletta. They could not lose such a heritage, they could not lose a place that could have been the hope for a better future for the entire Valley.

The day after, the small group of citizens talked in the streets, in the shops, in the cafés and in the squares of the village. The more they were spreading the news, the more people were joining their fight. Everybody was ready to fight for the Castle. By the end of the day, a hundred people were united to resist the ruthlessness of the king. The new “Wind of Change” blew all around the Valle dell’Aniene and all the other villages joined the cause. Thousands of people were marching side by side in the Valley, and they called themselves the Company of the Brightness.

As the king heard about the new company that was getting bigger every day more, he got really scared about the power of such an amount of people together, and he decided to recede in his intention to demolish the Castle and declared that the Castello della Cervelletta would be taken back as part of the proprieties that belonged the kingdom. But what the king didn’t think about, it was that the Castle was no longer a beautiful and bright Castle. It was ruined and grey. But the king was avid and he didn’t want to use his money, his treasure and his riches to fix it and renovate it. So, he left it in the woods, as ruined as it used to be.

The Company was really disappointed, this was just not enough. They won the battle, but the war still had to be fought. And so, in 2001 the Company gathered again, and this time it was even bigger. The Company was composed of people from all the villages of the Valley and all the animals that had been hiding in their dens came out to join the fight. They were interested in bringing back the harmony to the Castle and to the green fields of the Valley. The Company was now really colorful and the people were really diverse. There were the inhabitants of Colli Aniene, small and energetic people with large feet, there were the ones from Tor Sapienza extrovert, hospitable and with long legs, there were the kind and solitary people from La Rustica; there were the old and wise farmers that used to live in the lands of the Castle and that nowadays were living in tents all around the Valley. And in the end, there were the animals, as different as all the animals of the forest can be: birds, mammals, fish, insects, reptiles and so on. But no matter their differences, they all, humans and animals, had something in common: they had the brightness of the Castle and the harmony of the Valley in their hearts. They decided to write the Manifesto of the Company. The Manifesto was a wish list for the Castle of their dreams that would restore the brightness in the Valley.

Manifesto of the Castello della Cervelletta:

1. Clean and reevaluate the green area around the Castle.

The animals were the first one being interested in **preserving the green spaces**, so that they could come out from their dens and start to freely live again in the Valley. The loud and active people from Tor Sapienza were mostly striving to find a **space** where **families** could gather all together and where children were free to run and play surrounded by the healthy and colorful environment.

2. Restoration and renovation of the Open-Castle.

The inhabitants wanted the Castle to be renovated as it used to be, with all the magnificence of its history, from the medieval tower to the elegant courtyard. Inside the renewed Castle, the solitary people from La Rustica wanted to have a **library**, where they could study undisturbed and read the books to their children. The farmers were interested in coming back to their old houses and being able to share their knowledge to the people who passed by the Castle; therefore, they proposed to have a **farmer museum**, showing all the practices and the old tools their ancestors used to use while working on the lands around the Valley. It was important for them to promote and reevaluate their jobs, that had been underestimated by the kingdom for the past decades. The extrovert and hospitable citizens from Tor Sapienza wanted the Castle to be open to all their friends coming from all over the world. They therefore proposed to turn the building, that used to be a barn, into a **Hotel**³ where every traveler passing around the Valley could stay and get to know the beautiful Castle. They specified that the hotel should be built into the barn, maintaining the traditional patterns of the historical site. In this way the farmers were happy and satisfied as well, knowing that the original building would have not changed, but it would have been preserved and valorized.

3. Educational value of the Castle.

No matter their differences, humans and animals agreed that in order to preserve the brightness of the Castle and the harmony of the forest and of the green fields, their new Castle should have been a place where children, adults, locals and foreigners would have had the possibility to be educated about and for the **respect**, the **preservation** and the characteristic of the **flora** and the **fauna** of the Valley. Moreover, the farmers and the locals could tell stories of the old Castle, stressing the importance of the **cultural heritage** that the site had for all the villages of the Valley. In order to prevent history from happening again, they all agreed that children, should come to the Castle to be educated, from an early age, on the importance of the maintenance of the brightness of the Castello della Cervelletta.

After a long meeting, the inhabitants of the Valley, animals and humans, completed their Manifesto. They were really proud of it and it was the first thing that they've done as an organic group, very different one to the other, but with the same intention, the same dream: bring back the brightness for their villages. The day after the Company marched to the King's house to present their Manifesto and to demand for action from the King. They walked through the Valley, and the more they were walking across the villages, the more the people joined the march. The power of the Company was so

³ The proposal is about a new concept of Hotel that is the "Albergo diffuso". This new perspective of tourism aim to re-discover forgotten places, through the renovation of old buildings maintainign their original characteristic. The aim is to Re-use, Re-invent something that has already been built and that has to be preserved as it used to be. Projects like this are becoming really popular all around the world, especially in Italy which is the country where the first Albergo Diffuso was created.

<https://www.alberghidiffusi.it/>

big, they were happy, motivated and feeling the power of the union after this long dark time, that came with the Dark Wind of Power.

Meanwhile the King was busy counting his money and classifying his treasure in the royal house. He suddenly heard the voices of the people marching along the road to his place. He looked outside of the window, and saw the wave of people coming towards him. He immediately closed the window to hide himself, pretending not to be in. The Company reached the Royal house and looked up to the window with the balcony from where the King usually would come out. They started to shout for attention and called the King. They knocked at the main door several times, but nobody answered. The guards who were there soon pushed them away from the door. But the Company didn't give up and decided to camp right there, in front of the Royal house until the King would have read their Manifesto. They built a camp right there and they waited.

The King never opened that window. For two decades, he locked himself into the Royal house. Through the tunnel underneath his house he could get food from the outside. He was not brave enough to open the window and face the Company, that instead of giving up, was getting bigger every year. The King could hear the voices of the people who were living in the camp right outside his house.

The Company was so loud in front of the King's house that their voices reached the distant kingdom of Trastevere. The inhabitants of that kingdom were magic Elves. When the Elves heard about the cause that the people of the Valle dell'Aniene were fighting, they remembered their past fight against their king, who took away their magic. They had won that fight, but they knew how hard it was to not give up after such a long time. So, they decided to walk down from their hill, to join the Company. When they arrived, the people from the camp looked at them in a strange way. Most of them had never seen an Elf in their life. They were so different, they dressed different and it was hard to understand them when they were talking. The Elves talked to the Company and explained to them that their voices were so loud that they could hear them from their far away kingdom. They told them that they had fought a battle like this before, and now they wanted to help the Company to bring back the brightness of the Castle. The people of the Valley couldn't believe it. After all these years, after all the sacrifices, finally somebody heard their voices. Now that the Elves had joined their cause the people from the Valley decided to act, feeling motivated and stronger by having the Elves on their side. They decided together to build a very long ladder so that they could reach the balcony and finally get into the Royal house to see the King. The Elves didn't know how to build the ladder, but the citizens of the Valley came from a long tradition of being artisans so they organized themselves in a way that everybody had a task, in order to build the longest ladder they had ever built. The Elves were impressed by the work of the people from the Valley, they were so quick and well organized even if they were so diverse, with their different dimensions and different skills. They were working really fast. In the end, the ladder was just perfect to reach the balcony. It was then that the Elves proposed to go up the ladder themselves, since they could not help to build it, now it was their turn to act.

Meanwhile the King was into his house, relaxed and feeling safe inside his walls. He could not imagine that any moment, the Elves would have been right there. The Elves started to climb up while the people from the Company were holding the ladder from the bottom. Once all the Elves were up on the balcony, they shook their hands and shouted all together "CULTURAE"! A spell came out from their hands, went across the window of the royal house and hit the King right in his chest.

Right after the spell went across the King's heart, everything around the royal house was changing. The big walls all around the building disappeared. The huge amount of treasure and of money turned

into books and encyclopedias. The sun came out behind the darkness of the sky. The Company looked around them and what it used to be a sad Valley, now it was a sunny and colorful one, with flowers and butterflies flying all around them. The new kind and wise King opened the window and invited the Company into the royal house to listen to their proposals and to read their Manifesto. The people of the Company were so happy. Finally the King was listening to them, was listening to their needs, their fears and their reasons to have back the brightness in the Castle.

And so the King after having read the long and detailed Manifesto decided to work, together with the inhabitants of the Valley to bring back the brightness to the Castello della Cervelletta and to the Valle dell'Aniene.

With the passing years, all the projects and the proposals of the Company had been developed. The green fields around the Castle were clean and colorful. The families finally had a place to spend time in, in harmony with the animals living in those fields. The students and the solitary people could go to the library, together with the King that was a frequent visitor who donated a lot of his books to set on the shelves of the library. The farmers were having constant visitors into their museum from schools and tourists, coming to learn about their practices and their estimated job. Also the Hotel was as perfect as it had been imagined and everybody was welcome to stay over, to appreciate and respect the harmony of the Castle. The Castello della Cervelletta was now a central place of the Valley, always open for all the different people passing by. It was a place where people from the Valley and foreigners could come to learn about its cultural heritage and the importance of the preservation of the harmony between humans and nature.

Thanks to the perseverance, the union and the wishes of the many different people and animals of the Valley, the Brightness and the Harmony of the Valle dell'Aniene and of the Castello della Cervelletta, were back again. The Wind of change blew through the Valley driving away the Dark Wind of power, forever.



1. The Castello della Cervelletta



2. Il Cinema in Piazza, summer 2018. I ragazzi del Cinema America

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