

IRIDE PROJECT - Massimo Daví & Monica Miuccio

“LE STREGHE DI MONTENERODOMO”

(The Witches of Montenerodomo) Radio Drama in

Abruzzo Dialect

After a tale by Monica Miuccio (Keltia Ed. - 1996)

SYNOPSIS:

"Members of an archaic community embody their fears of natural calamities in evil supernatural, ghostly creatures that are believed to be the manifestation of Devil., Witches.

Their superstitions are not fueled by mere ignorance but are rooted in pre-Christian beliefs -preserved by their isolation- that now live side by side with the Word of Gospel. The line between prayers and exorcisms is very thin and can be crossed by a wise elderly woman who is known to have the basic knowledge of spells, charms, rituals, evil-eye and amulet crafting, and the Sorceress who practises the more powerful white and black magic.

The blend of religion and magic is accepted in a communal sense of unity and brotherhood, marking the day-to-day life. Villagers finally fight against the Witches relying on each other in a circle of strength. They defeat Demons in the very same moment they overcome fear and even when the Witches have gone, so strong is their belief in their actions that it shapes history to their creed, turning reality into legend." (Monica Miuccio)

LANGUAGE:

There are about 31 regional dialects in Italy. It is estimated that 32% of the population speaks both Italian and dialects, and 14% speaks only dialect. "Abruzzese" is one of the most musical dialect and this is the reason why we decided to adopt it for this production, as Monica is from Abruzzo.

In terms of physical geography, Abruzzo is a region of Central Italy. However it may be considered part of Southern Italy because of the historic association with the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies.

Our story takes place in a tiny rural village of this Italian region.

THE WITCHES OF MONTENERODOMO

Long ago, when the wind blew, we all stopped to listen. If it was just a breeze everything continued as usual, but sometimes it was so furious that it turned the world upside down.

So, aunt Rosa cast an exorcism

I beg you wind go away
To the farthest mountain
Where there's no Christened being
In the name of Jesus Christ and the Virgin Mary
Listen to my prayer Holy Trinity
Send this wind away and protect us
(*In the name of*) Father Son Holy Spirit, Amen
Father Son Holy Spirit, Amen

Aunt Rosa was right, that wind was not the Lord's work.

It tolled the church-bells, it un-sowed the ploughed fields, it tore out trees.
So we called the children and picked the laundry, wet or not and the men,
wherever they were, latched the barns and ran home.

They shut the barns... the stables...

They locked all the windows, doors... latched... everything shut... and put a broom in front of them, upright!

(note: the broom at the door prevents the Witches from entering the house).

Grandmother fetched the sweets that were kept from some wedding and gave them to the children to silence them so that they could not be heard outside.

Outside there was only the wind and the screams of the Witches on horseback.

They banged... broke... dragged... tore up everything!

Some boys tried to peer from a chink but we scolded them:

"What are you doing? Don't you know that Witches can not be seen? "

You couldn't see them, but you could hear them dancing in a circle, in the village square. They jumped and screamed, casting curses at everyone, all night long.

How could you sleep...?

At dawn, the women took the children and stripped them naked to spot any signs of the evil eye, while the men entered the barns, terrified, to check the cattle.

If the horses had their mane braided it meant that they now belonged to the Witches, and we could no longer touch them; you can't anger the Witches, otherwise they would take revenge!

And since we couldn't do anything to stop them, the Witches started to show more and more often. They came from all over Mount Majella.

Dear me, the children lost their appetite, the girls fainted, the olive trees withered...

And that wasn't enough!

I'll tell you something... there was once... the Witches had gone, the turmoil of the night was over, the day was breaking, and Mannina sang a lullaby to send her child finally to sleep :

(singing)

Oh my lullaby oh lullaby,

the wolf ate the sheep

Oh my little sheep how did you do

when the wolf came out of the bush?

Oh my lullaby oh lullaby

Sleep my sweet baby

if you sleep the wolf won't find you

My beautiful baby and his mom, heart-to-heart

But around noon poor Mannina got out of her house crying and screaming, scratching her face with the fingernails

"The baby! The child! The Witches took the baby! I found the broom laid on the ground! "

Now, this is what happened: a Witch counted all the bristles of the broom

without a miss, entered the house, sent Mannina to sleep -Mannina did not realise that the sleep was a spell, you know- and snatched the baby.

(note: if the Witch managed to count all the bristles without a miss she could enter the house)

Hearing this story we got scared...

"Not even with the broom at the door can we be safe at home now?"

"Oh my god... the Witches *(last night)* only pretended to leave!"

We needed the "breve"

(note: a charmed pouch to be worn around the neck, containing a number of items).

A woman from Guastameroli used to make them To craft the breve you need 9 things:

3 bay leaves

3 olive leaves blessed on Palm Sunday

5 grains of incense

7 grains of wheat

5 pebbles picked up where 4 roads meet

5 grains of salt

a stump of candle lit up for dead man

a piece of cassock

a shred of the skirt of a harlot...

...but it must be a real one, not just... rumours.

The woman knew what to do. She made the breve and we put it around our necks whispering and muttering the words: "Deliver us from evil... deliver us from evil"

And for 9 months we lived in peace, but in the end the Witches returned and started again, worse than before. They thought they were in charge!

But there was Domenico Antonio...

He was the strongest guy of the village and he was not afraid of anyone.

One day, after everything that had happened, without saying anything to anyone, relying on his fear of God he went to Colle Marcone.

In Colle Marcone lived the most powerful Sorceress.

The priest warned the villagers to stay away from her, and the old folks said that she was an aged woman when they were children.

Domenico Antonio told her everything and she said:

"Breve is not sufficient to get rid of a coven.

Do what I tell you to do. Do it with your countrymen and they won't come back.

For seven generations all of you will be free.

And if in the meantime the Witches will find another place to meet they would never be back.

But mind, none of you must show any sign of fear.

Mind, the Witches would smell it. They are Demon's disciples.

If one of you gets scared, just one... everything will be done in vain.

Keep that in mind!"

Now... travelling to Colle Marcone at that time was a long journey, not like nowadays.

Domenico Antornio rode a mule!

So, as we didn't see him for days, we thought that the Witches had taken him.

But when he came back... Oh good Lord! You should have seen Aunt Berenice, she cried of joy!

And we did everything he told us to do.

On Christmas Eve all the men of the village met at the square with their knives and pitchforks, waiting for the Witches.

At midnight they leaned on the pitchforks and saw the Witches, one by one.

So they stuck their knives in the ground at once

(note: by sticking the knife in to the ground between you and the Witch you were guaranteed safety)

Then, the oldest Witch, spoke to the men, one by one:

"Hey pal, get the knife off "

"My friend, take the knife off "

"Take that knife off the ground!!!"

But no one moved. Nobody was afraid.

So the Witch was forced to shout in anger:

"For seven generations your family will not be touched by us"

"We will not touch your family...for seven generations... "

"For seven generations your family will not be touched by us!!!"

And from that night the Witches never came back.

The children regained their appetite, the girls got engaged and the olive trees grew as healthy as never seen before

Well... the Witches had gone, yes, but not that far.

They built their own square made of large stones, all worn out because of the fury with which they dance.

Near the square there are the cages where they imprisoned the cursed ones.

But "professors" don't believe it. No. They say that place was built by ... what did they say...? "Ancient Romans"... They say that the square is not a square but a theatre and that the cages are not cages but houses. They told us to visit the place, they also gave it a name, those ... "professors". They call it

... IU-VA- NUM.

They say to visit it... Visit it??? It's full of Witches!!!

So there is never anyone at IUVANUM. Only sweethearts go there every now and then...

(singing)

My love, my love lower those branches
let me pick the beautiful flower
My love, my love don't trick me
give me the rose with all the leaves
My love, my love don't get me in trouble
I'm little and I'll tell mom

And then they leave. They leave early, before night falls. Before the Witches start to scream...



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