The Telegraph's 'Lost in Time' Italian Ghost Town Inspires New Children's Eco-Book, Blending Fairy Tale and Drone Technology

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"Simonetta, Ruggero and the Cherry Forest of Celleno," a new illustrated picture book by **Giulio Gargiullo**, is now available on Amazon. Set in a real Italian village in Italy's Lazio region, **the book is built around a single idea: passing through fantasy, mixed with historical and reality references, at the end of the story, children discover that the magical village they've just read about is real**, and **a QR code hidden in the final pages** lets them see it for themselves, through a live aerial drone flight over Celleno's authentic medieval Ghost Town (Il Borgo Fantasma) and its ancient fortress. The project is presented as a model for regional marketing through digital storytelling, transforming children's literature into a sustainable tourism tool designed to bring a growing number of Italian and international visitors to discover the Ghost Town for themselves.

The book has received the **official patronage of the Municipality of Celleno**, recognising its role in promoting regional heritage, ethical values, and local traditions. The Ghost Town of Celleno, located in central Italy's Lazio region, just 90 minutes from Rome, was named by **The Telegraph** among the 25 most beautiful villages in Italy lost in time.

"Celleno is deeply personal to me," said the author. "My roots here run through my maternal grandfather, and I received Honorary Citizenship of the town in 2024. I wrote this story during a difficult period in my life, and both writing and creativity became a real source of comfort — a way to turn something hard into something I could give to others, and to a place I love. It's part of why I believe small, meaningful projects like this one can help small communities as much as they help the people who make them. What fascinates me most is the idea that, through a fairy tale, children and their parents might one day visit Celleno for real."

Key facts for parents, educators, and journalists:

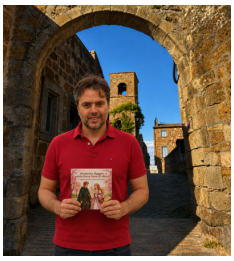
- **From Fairy Tale to Reality:** leads readers from fantasy directly to a real-world destination, showing children that the magical setting genuinely exists.
- **Whole-Family Engagement:** encourages parent-child bonding through an interactive "look-and-find" visual game and by inspiring families to plan a trip together.
- **A Destination Marketing Model:** intended as an example of how digital storytelling can showcase lesser-known cultural destinations and support sustainable tourism.
- **Five Concrete Eco-Habits:** encourages children to become "Little Guardians of Nature" through simple daily tasks, such as creating bird-watering stations or planting seeds.
- **The Power of Kindness:** the main characters model core values including empathy, mutual respect, and the idea that true strength comes from a gentle heart.
- **Local Roots:** draws on documented local history — the castle was ruled for over a century by the powerful Gatti family, a noble Viterbese dynasty, before passing to the Orsini family. The story takes its inspiration from a noblewoman of that lineage.

The Narrative & Values

The story follows the bond between Simonetta, a gentle and inquisitive girl, and Ruggero, a traveller who chooses a life of simplicity over material wealth. Guided by a silver stag and a guardian harpy, the two promise to protect the forest and all who live in it. Throughout, the tale is woven with real details from Celleno's history and present-day life — its medieval castle, ancient cherry forest, valley-view bench and spring cherry festival — set alongside its purely imagined characters and magic, guiding children and parents on a journey that leads, by the final page, to **a QR code revealing that Celleno is real, and open for them to visit**. The story's message is that genuine strength comes from compassion.

The Eco-Awareness Tasks

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Rather than a straightforward bedtime story, the book also functions as a simple educational tool. Tucked into its final pages, "Little Guardians of Nature" invites young readers to practise simple, everyday green habits — from caring for garden birds to planting a seed of their own — turning the story's gentle message into small actions children can genuinely carry into daily life.

At its heart, "Simonetta, Ruggero and the Cherry Forest of Celleno" is **a small treasure chest of values for children and parents alike**: a story built on discovery, on kindness carried through its characters, and on a gentle call to action for nature.

"Simonetta, Ruggero and the Cherry Forest of Celleno" is **available now worldwide on Amazon:** https://www.amazon.it/Simonetta-Ruggero-Cherry-Forest-Celleno/dp/B0HDLVXHST/

About Giulio Gargiullo

Giulio Gargiullo was born in Rome, but his roots run deep in the village of Celleno, where he spends part of every year in his family's home. An expert in communication and digital marketing with international experience, he has spent years working to promote and celebrate Italy's small historic villages. In 2024, he was named Honorary Citizen of the Municipality of Celleno for his work spreading the beauty and history of the village through the media. Through this fairy tale, he brings together his passion for storytelling and digital communication with a deep connection to the land, championing the values of love, nature, tradition, and the genuine, lasting growth of small communities.

Notes to Editors:

High-resolution images, the book cover, and physical review copies are available on request.

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