**MONOLITH CABINS**

*SHELTER THROUGH SCENERY*

*A narrative approach*

"*Tell me about the monolith Al*" Dave thundered.

"*I can't do it, you'll have to see it and live it in person*" replied Al.

"*We don't have time!”*

"*You and Dave will find it!”*

Thus ended our conversation with that metallic, cold, grumpy voice. From that moment on we found ourselves catapulted into a valley, a valley we had never seen before, full of strong contrasts. There were green spaces juxtaposed with desert areas, horses grazing and carcasses lying on the banks of dry lakes. A place where the contrast was very present, but there seemed to be a balance. A balance made of strong contrasts. We immediately understood that this must have been the place described by Al, we immediately understood that there was the landscape that was the master.

We walked for over a day, we walked 30 km without meeting anyone, we thought we ended up in a desolate, deserted and abandoned place, we thought.

And here appeared a silhouette, we glimpsed a figure about ten meters high very dark that from a distance appeared in a massive and monolithic way.

We realized that perhaps we had found it.

"*Dave, you see what I see*" pointing to that inert and mysterious silhouette.

"*The monolith, we finally found it!*" I thundered.

We no longer walked, we began to run, the tiredness seemed to have vanished. We didn't feel the fatigue of the trip anymore, we began to perceive a sense of joy, of carefreeness and peace with nature.

Approaching, little by little, it was possible to see new details: here the initial black color turns, it starts to become a very dark brown, a particular wood, almost a burnt wood; you could not tell if it was burnt by the strong and hot summer sun or by the glacial winter temperatures.

The mass was not at all uniform, as we had thought, were well distinguishable the vertical strips, small wooden beams that run along the entire surface covering the volume, it seems almost a dress woven by the best tailor in the area.

The verticality given by the slats reminds me a lot of the verticality of Indian tents.

"*Do you remember Dave, Al always told us about it, centuries ago they lived in these lands great tribes!”*

The slats are anchored to thin horizontal beams that surround the volume, almost as if they were sinuous belts of a noble city woman.

The base was very similar to what Al had told us, they were stones of different shape, size and color, stacked without mortar inside a metal mesh of a very dark color, all forming a system of gabion walls.

Looking at the top, here appears a hat, or rather something more, it is a room totally open on all four sides; who knows what view and what panorama and possible to enjoy from up there, I thought.

After a more careful analysis we understood how it was structured, who had built it had used a platform frame technique every floor was very simple and repeatable even infinitely, a monolith hundreds of meters high, could be very interesting, maybe not in this landscape so horizontal.

The basic structure is formed by wooden beams and pillars, all covered with thin panels, always in recycled material. Internally there was the most interesting aspect, the internal temperature is guaranteed through the use of treated straw, stacked and inserted between the pillars, an excellent natural insulation, ecological and low cost both economic and energy.

"*Hey, what are you guys doing here?*"

"*Hello lady!*" I said kindly.

"*What are you doing under my monolith?*"

A little old lady over 90 years old came towards us, waving a stick and shouting with a shrill voice and a strange accent.

We decided to tell her all about our adventure and ask her to tell us what could be done, what activities could be done inside and around the monolith.

She told us that the building could be a support for various functions: on the ground floor, between the two stone walls, there was an intimate space, sheltered from the weather where there was a large cistern to collect rainwater, she told us that it could hold more than 5000 liters; there was also a large battery, Mrs. Archman, told us that on the roof there were in fact 3 solar panels, the energy was stored in different batteries and guaranteed the roof during the whole period when there was enough sun.

On the ground floor there was also the hydroponic cultivation, leaning against the gabion wals, essential sustenance for the inhabitants, moreover, through technology, the water consumption is 90% lower than a traditional cultivation.

He explained how the upper floors could be used in different ways: they could be resting places for hikers, you could sleep, read, write and chat. They could be places of meditation or meeting places where meetings could be held in an elevated landscape and naturalistic context, always visible through the different openings.

The openings were one of the strong points of the monolith, looking at some faces you could not see any light source; turning the corner you were amazed by the landscapes reflected in the windows.

Seeing our expression Mrs. Archman told us "*You should enter and see the views that are framed by each opening, each window is a journey, an experience!”*

"*Let us in...*"

"*No, not today!*" I didn't even finish the sentence he shut me up, he told me that this was not the right time, we were not ready.

Outside it was possible to hang curtains and drapes of different sizes on the structure in order to create additional covered spaces protected from both sun and rain.

A simple and functional structure, adaptable to any need. He told us that the monolith could be divided into sub parts, moved, rotated and disassembled taking it anywhere where it was needed. It reminded me of a story he told me some time ago, when he saw stones rolling over the desert and leaving a subtle trace of their passage on the ground.

Basically the monolith could be both a covered and sheltered place where to carry out activities, a collector of water and energy, and a place of food production.

It needs few things to work: the sun or wind to produce energy, rainwater (in wet periods) or imported water to operate hydroponics and some basic services; in essence, it needs few natural elements and the right environmental conditions.

Maintenance is minimal since the wood is treated to withstand the weather and the foundations are dry, away from sources of humidity.

Waste is negligible, any organic waste is collected by a dry system that reduces the amount of waste through high temperatures and solar radiation; hydroponics water waste is negligible and there is no other water waste.

The monolith can be disassembled since it is made totally dry, the materials can be reused in any way, generating a minimum amount of waste.

The foundations are punctual, the structure is therefore reversible and if disassembled leaves no trace except for a few holes in the ground that can be easily filled, restoring the starting condition.

Mrs. Archman, told us to go and patrol the area and visit the "nesting". When we arrived on the site we saw 4 monoliths joined together, connected to each other by an external canopy made of crossed wooden beams. An incredible complex, a place where you could stay, do workshops or simply tell a story around fire; a place of community, a place and a space that created an identity community, dialoguing with the landscape and nature.

Suddenly I woke up, I was in my bed, I realized that it had all been just a dream, Al, the monolith nothing had existed, only Dave sleeping next to me was real.

We got up and decided that we too would build our own monolith. We decided that if the forces would not be enough we would only create a prototype. In fact, we thought, that we could build even one floor of the structure, one of the wooden floors, maybe the one with the ribbon window, one of those beautiful floors covered with black slats. We thought that in a month it could be built without major problems.

***Technical aspects***

The wood of the construction has been chosen because it is itself a reserve of CO2, a transfer that can be used if it comes from controlled and certified supply chains.

The straw is often seen as a waste material and unusable, however, has been used in several projects, if properly treated ensures excellent energy performance and durability, also does not produce any kind of waste pollutants.

The wood coating has been treated using processes with low ecological impact in order to ensure good durability and low maintenance.

The rocks of the basement are local rocks do not travel great distances, therefore, the transport does not affect except to a very small extent. They are dry assembled using the gabion walls technique, totally reversible.

The foundations are punctual, they are punctual excavations of small size and depth so they are also reversible.

The materials used are the following:

- local stone of various dimensions

- wooden pillars (300\*20\*6)

- wood panels (165\*1.5\*300)

- straw

- windows

- wooden laths (315\*3\*3)

- wooden beams (300\*20\*6)

- water-repellent barrier

- bolts and screws

- steel plates

- Pole foundations (300\*20\*6)

- hydroponics

- solar panels and battery

- water collection pipes and water tank

- wooden staircase

The total cost is about 35,000 (dollars) for a single monolith.