



CHARLIE ALICE RAYA

easy town books

building

campaigns & getting started

book 4, part 1

easy town books

CHARLIE ALICE RAYA

CAMPAIGNS FOR OUR FUTURE

special editions
book 4, building
day 24 - day 17

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campaigns

book 4, building
special edition 3

(24) Around half past four, the next morning, on the ground floor of the Back House, a bleary eyed Andy opened his front door to let Alice in. ‘Coffee?’ ‘Yes, please.’ In his tiny kitchen, Andy poured coffee for them both and shook his head. ‘Alice, I’m just your deputy. I’m not sure I should be in charge of the entire town project.’ Alice chuckled. ‘I’m not entirely sure I should be. Look, Andy, it’s just for eighteen hours, and you can find me any time at the boot camp. From tomorrow on, there’ll be two new boot camp teams.’ Andy handed Alice a mug with coffee. ‘I’m glad your boot camp is here at the Compound.’ ‘Me too,’ Alice returned and took a sip of coffee. ‘I would have had to leave at midnight to get to the remote place where the other camps are.’ Andy took a deep breath. ‘OK. Talk me through it. What do I have to do?’ Alice put down her mug. ‘Have an open ear for all teams. Today is the Longevity Team’s NO PLASTIC DAY which starts at 7:00. That’s where my eyes would have focused on. At eight the Business Expansion Team starts with their campaigns to make our business models more widely understood while offering new job opportunities. Seth might check in with you on that. But I don’t think you need to worry about them. I wanted to visit the SEW YOUR OWN SHOPPING BAG event along the Thames, but it’s OK if you don’t. The march in favour of our town project begins at five to twelve. THE keeps an eye on them. But it would be good if our teams are easy to reach, interested, on board, you know. The march organisers don’t want us involved, but it should be obvious that we appreciate the event and the support.’ Andy nodded and asked: ‘Will ripples news report from the march?’ ‘Yes, they will. At three minutes to noon, Isabel, as the head of all campaigns, will sound the gong in the atrium and announce all campaigns’ event locations for the rest of the day. It’s a livestream. It might be good to check in for reactions afterwards. And then— well, usually by that time something

unexpected happened.’ ‘Alice, I don’t know whether I can do this.’ ‘Andy, you’re not alone. You have the team.’ ‘Half of whom are at those bloody millionaires boot camps.’ ‘Only today. Tomorrow, we’ll all be back.’ A knock on the door was followed by Rohana, and the three of them went over the plans for the day again. Eventually Rohana said: ‘If Andy keeps his eyes on the campaigns and on the march, and I on the Business Expansion Team and on Jellybridge, then we should be OK.’ Shortly afterwards, at eleven to five, Isabel (head of campaigns) picked up Alice. ‘Thanks Isabel, for doing my speeches, today.’ ‘Don’t thank me, yet. I read them. I like them. But I might change them nonetheless. I’m not you. And they are very much you.’ Alice smiled. ‘Thanks. I put a lot of effort into those first ones. And I can’t believe I’m missing the start of our public speeches. But, yes, change as much as you want. Be all you.’ Isabel smiled. ‘Can I use that: Be all you?’ ‘Absolutely.’ Slowly, Alice and Isabel crossed the courtyard of the Back House to discuss a few details of the speeches, which were part of a five days series by the Campaigns & Negotiations Team with several speeches a day at universities, town halls, companies, clubs, arts centres, NGOs, government departments and the like by the team’s key speakers: Alice, Raiden (town simulation), John (business), Marita (economics), Hayley (tech), Emine (law), Dana (ecology), Navarro (society), Robin (education) and Skye (care). When Alice and Isabel reached studio 2, they wrapped their meeting, and Alice entered studio 2 where Alice’s boot camp team were already waiting for her, and Tilly repeated everyone’s jobs for the day: ‘Responsible for workouts, meditations, yoga and body awareness are me, Jazz, Calum, Devery, Eliza and Jane. For foods and cooking we have one of our favourite couples: Mudiwa and Tabansi from ripples news, plus Xolani, Damian and Verity from Security, and Jesse from Towns and Cities

International. For everything imagination we have Alice, plus our education specialist Robin, our universe specialist Kahu, our formidable Raha, princess incognito, our wonderful author Bülent, and our inimitable top dot.designer Hachiro. And last but absolutely not least we have Dennie and Isha for ease. Some of you might have noticed that a lot of people on this team are also with our Security Team. They are just that tad more flexible than the town team, and we are immensely grateful that you're all available at this short notice. 'Don't mention it,' Dennie returned with a grin. Tilly smiled and said: 'I tried not to mention it, but it just wanted out. Anyways, Bülent, our star author, is the only one of us who has been to some of the previous millionaires boot camps. We are pretty confident that our camp will rock, but, Bülent, is there anything, you'd like to share before we go over our boot camp's schedule?' 'Thanks, Tilly,' Bülent returned. 'I have high hopes for this team, in particular because there will be elements of spontaneity and imperfection today which is something I thought was sometimes missing at the other boot camps. We want to inspire people who have lost most connections to the planet, to society, to themselves. At previous boot camps, the only times something got through to them, in the beginning, were the moments they sweated at the workouts, and the moments when something unexpected, spontaneous, imperfect happened. The first six to seven hours of each boot camp were incredibly tough, which is why the head of the original boot camp recommended that, from today on, all boot camps should begin with an exhaustive workout plus fighting sessions, followed by a fire breath experience and an ice bath. Everything we say before that sort of physical overload and exhaustion is most likely lost.' 'Does that let me off giving a warmup speech?' Alice ask hopefully. Bülent twitched the corner of his mouth. 'Not to open with an

introduction would be unexpected. Unexpected opens minds. And since you are quite a good stick fighter by now, I'd leave the first interactions to Jazz and Tilly, and make your entrance at the fights.' Alice smiled. 'I like the sound of that.' While the teams of all boot camps prepared for the arrivals of their 37 millionaires, other members of the town project team began with their day at Jellybridge and at the project businesses. And the campaigns teams got ready for today's events in twenty UK cities and for additional events on the Hub Campaigns Square dedicated to the growing international audience. At seven, the LONGEVITY team announced today's first task for the NO PLASTIC DAY: 'Find everything in your household that is made of plastic. Throw out what you can (find collection points on the Hub Campaign Square), and replace items you need with no-plastic alternatives.' In the ensuing discussions, the LONGEVITY team pushed seven major topics: Firstly, the nature of plastic. Plastic is dead, and dead things can only cause death. Secondly: Plastic in our blood, plastic in our foods, plastic in our oceans. How did plastic become this ubiquitous? Thirdly: How can we free ourselves and our planet from plastic? Fourthly: define need. What do we need? And why? Fifthly: natural materials. What are natural materials? Sixthly: Can we reconnect to nature via the materials we use? And how did the disconnection to natural materials come about? Seventhly: How can we ensure a sustainable level of using natural materials? Plus a discussion about rewilding, native and non-native plants.' There were more NO PLASTIC events. All of them were eyed with suspicion and a certain degree of: You can't just demand of us to change everything. Besides, everything is toxic. Everything causes harm. That's the way it is. The one NO PLASTIC DAY event that took off from the start and was a great favourite with people of all ages and walks of life was

the shopping bag sewing event along the Thames with 1111 sewing machines, and another 1111 knitting spots and another 1111 knotting spots. The campaign sponsored all materials, plus snacks and beverages. When Andy and Troy went on a stroll along the Thames, saying hello here and there, Andy, unexpectedly, had a laugh because Troy would chat with strangers and then add mini caricatures to the new shopping bags or to a scrap of cloth which would then be added to a knitted bag. Soon, word got around, and an hour later other cartoonists began to join the event to leave their marks on the bags, too. Before noon, Andy left and checked in with the organisers of the march, who shrugged and pointed to the crowd of about a thousand people walking down Whitehall. 'It's a start,' one of them remarked. Andy didn't know what to respond and soon left to check on a NARRATIVES CAMPAIGN event in Victoria Park where some racists were looking for trouble. By the time Andy arrived, Project Security had already walked the troublemakers to a designated troublemakers spot where two of them ranted on while the rest wasn't happy about being ridiculed by the audience and walked off. After a pleasant chat with Penelope, head of the NARRATIVES CAMPAIGN, Andy returned to the Compound. 'How are you?' Hayley (tech) asked when Andy was back on the seventh floor of the Central Building. Andy smiled a little. 'I'm glad it's only another ten hours and twenty-one minutes. But it's OK so far. Kind of. Have you heard from the boot camp? From Alice?' 'You can sneak onto the roof and see them on the Back House roof. Last time, I looked they were doing yoga. Though I guess their imagination session will have begun by now. In the morning they were pretty loud when they hosed each other down in the courtyard. Sounded like fun. And they sent their breakfast leftovers up, which were delicious fruit and veggie creations. Why do you look so

grumpy?’ Andy shrugged. ‘There’s people asking why we go to all this trouble for bleeding millionaires. I’m with them.’ ‘We’re doing it because we have too many destructive millionaires. And the damage they cause is massive. If the boot camps can turn even a few destructive millionaires into inspired humans who build, create and nurture, then that will have been worth this particular trouble.’ Some two hours later, Alice felt quite inspired by the imagination sessions on the roof of the Back House. The guests and team had just come down from the roof to the courtyard for a snack break when Jazz approached Alice, a frown on her face, a phone in her hand. ‘The mayor of London.’ Alice grimaced, took the phone and walked towards studio 3 to get out of earshot. ‘Hello?’ ‘I DON’T WANT TO SEE YOU EVERY DAY!’ ‘Is that why you’re calling?’ ‘ALICE ADLER, THIS—’ ‘—I know, I know. This is not a game. What is it this time? Sorry. What can I do for you? I mean why are you calling? Damn! I don’t know what I’m supposed to say. Could you just get to the point, and assume I asked in an acceptable way?’ There was silence on the other end of the line, and Alice sighed. ‘Look, I can hand you to my assistant. She is much—’ ‘—Are you having a bad day?’ the mayor interrupted. Alice grimaced. ‘Not until you called. Sorry. Too direct. Maybe I’m a bit overstretched. Long day. Intense. I don’t mean to take it out on you. And I honestly don’t know the protocol for getting to the point politely.’ The mayor seemed to chuckle and he said: ‘I think, you’re quite amazing. You, your team, your project, your campaigns. It seems that the conversations your teams initiate are key to a sustainable future. BUT.’ The mayor’s voice sounded sterner again. ‘BUT I don’t want to see mountains of plastic on my streets. That’s what you get if you empower people: mountains of rubbish!’ ‘Wrong!’ Alice retorted impatiently. ‘Empower people and they have a reason to act! Initiate a necessary event, the removal of

plastic, and empowered people will have fun taking the action that's needed. And by doing so, they boost the conversations around plastic. We have all seen images of plastic carpets in the oceans. But that's not half as effective as if you see mountains of plastic on your walk to your favourite coffeeshop. People want change. They want to see. They want to act. They need a way to make a contribution. Our project doesn't have to be the only project who gives people a voice and an event which offers everyone a chance to act — and to act together.' There was something like a grunt at the other end of the line. Then the mayor said rather quietly: 'I have an excellent team, but we can neither keep up with the complaints we get because of your campaigns nor do we have the capacities to remove this much plastic waste.' 'I know that the Longevity Team made provisions for such a case. Could one of my team call one of your team to brief them on how my team will deal with this?' 'Your team will deal with mountains of plastic?' the mayor asked doubtfully. 'That's the only thing I know.' 'Whom do I call?' 'My assistant Rohana.' 'OK. But I want more updates. Three updates a day: at eight, at noon, and at six.' 'Done.' After the call, Alice went back to the snack bar and was just about to respond to a millionaire's remark on mind-enhancing foods when a panicky looking Emine appeared and dragged Alice back towards studio 3. 'What's the matter?' Alice asked. 'Alice, you've been ordered to parliament. Now! At once! Immediately!' Alice frowned. 'What's the problem with that? Isn't that a good thing?' 'What do you know about the House of Commons?' 'I heard the term, I think.' Emine cursed in Turkish. 'I'm coming with you! Though, I doubt, they'll let me in. Can I get a whisper connection to you, like Security has?' 'Probably. Emine, what's the problem?' Emine exhaled impatiently and noticed that Jazz and more of Security were jogging their way.

'Jazz,' Emine called. 'I need to be in Alice's ear.' Jazz overtook them, opened the door to studio 3 and led the way to a hidden door at the right. 'How much do you know about the British Parliament, Emine?' Jazz asked over her shoulder. 'About the procedures in the House of Commons and the committees?' 'I know enough,' Emine retorted. Then she relented. 'Maybe I could have an expert in my ear?' Alice frowned. Jazz and Ilesha uncovered the secret door. 'I'm coming, too,' Dennie said as he and more members of Security entered the studio. 'No problem,' Tilly said, who had followed them and looked worried. 'We can do the camp without all of you. Don't worry, Alice. I mean, I mean it. This looks important.' 'I'm not worried,' Alice returned with a half-smile for Tilly, and frowning again, she said to Emine: 'And I don't get the excitement.' Ilesha and Anthony opened the access to the security slide, and Jazz got off her phone. 'Jane, Anthony and Jordie have the cars ready. Let's go.' Alice shook her head. 'Emine, if I should have known about this House thing and committees, why didn't you tell me before?' Emine grimaced. 'I didn't think of it, if you must know. I thought we'd simply talk to the PM not to hundreds of MPs. I'm sorry, Alice.' 'Alice, let's go,' Jazz said. 'In a second. What do I need to know, Emine? I mean, it's a parliament, and some people there want to ask questions, right?' Emine looked at Jazz who shrugged. 'Alice might be right. Let's go.' 'Glad to hear it,' Alice said, lowered herself down to the curvy slide and enjoyed the sensation of almost flying down to the escape tunnels where three security cars were waiting for them. On the drive to parliament, Jazz said: 'You'll probably talk to a committee. Nothing big, I should think. But you should remember that all meetings in parliament are recorded and broadcast. Also, Britain is divided into constituencies and each of them has an MP in the House of Commons.' 'Jellybridge has an MP, too?' 'Not

just Jellybridge. Jellybridge is part of a larger constituency.’ ‘Do we know the MP?’ Jazz shook her head. ‘But we know that he’s not in favour of the project.’ ‘Hm.’ In the House of Parliament, it was impossible not to be impressed by the pomp. At the same time, Alice wondered whether this grandeur wasn’t one of the reasons why politicians lost all connections to the people and the land they were supposed to serve. And why, again and again, politicians followed narratives drenched in superiority complexes which led them to collaborate in wars, to cosy up to oligarchs and autocrats, to chuckle about their own corruptions and to feel good about treating critical voices like terrorists. After the security check, Alice was brought to a committee room on the third floor. Old fashioned wood panelling, modern desks placed in a semicircle where five MPs had taken their seats, a straight table in front of them where Alice was asked to sit. Another three people, probably observers, sat on chairs along the wall, behind Alice. Without a prelude, Alice was presented with a list of conditions she would have to agree to if she wanted to build the town in the UK. Each MP had one of Troy’s comics WHY AUTONOMY MATTERS in front of them and repeatedly referred to it when they elaborated on what they couldn’t agree to, and what they insisted on instead. The MP’s conditions boiled down to the following: police presence, law and order according to UK law, control by the UK government, no experiments without the UK government’s permission, the project has to do additional experiments the government asks for, access for government experts and other observers on location with full data access, towners and the project have to pay taxes, anyone can invest in the town, including the government, and would receive returns on investments, no restrictions for any businesses, national and international, the town must present a plan for the transition after the experiment,

provision of affordable housing, no migrant labour, no more than eighteen months for experiments, plus the government's right to stop the experiment any time. When Alice got a chance to respond, she said: 'And what good would it be to build a town which is stuck in the same bullshit as any other town? If you want to know what happens if you apply free market rules and inadequate, biased, lobbied government interventions, then look at any town and city in this country. You don't need a new town to prove that these rules don't result in what our project is interested in — thriving humans, thriving nature. Good day,' Alice added and stood up. A politician, friendly eyes, said: 'We don't have the power to give you the rights you demand.' 'It's an experiment. A study. Something that's designed to be of benefit to every person on this planet, something that addresses everything the governments of this planet have failed to address. And you tell me, you're not allowed to act in the best interest of the people you represent?' The politician looked thoughtful. Then she returned: 'You have given us something to think about. But for the benefit of every person? How would you deal with conflicts of interest?' 'My guess is that conflicts of interest are just another story, and an excuse to keep us from figuring out how to work and live together.' 'Thank you.' Another MP shook his head. 'I knew this was a waste of time!' 'I didn't,' Alice mumbled, walked to the door, opened it and involuntarily stopped. *What's this?* Jazz, Dennie, Anthony and Jane were looking at her — and so were about a hundred other people, some pushing towards the door. Dennie grabbed Alice's arm. 'We want you out of here quick!' Jane covered Alice's back while Jazz and Anthony began to push through the curious crowd. *Curious?* Alice swallowed. Some people were shouting at her. Others were pushing towards her. 'Keep your head down! Don't listen!' Dennie called over the noise, half

dragging Alice forward, half pushing against a new onslaught of people. From the corner of her eye, Alice saw that a fight broke out between several people. Apparently some people were trying to get hold of someone who was pushing to get to her. 'Alice! Eyes ahead! Down the stairs! Come on! Eyes ahead!' Alice stumbled on. Finally outside, another crowd started to shout, but here Security and the police had created a passage to the security car. Dennie pushed Alice into the back of the car, and seconds later Ilesha got moving. *The best driver on the Security Team*, Alice thought as she slowly became aware of herself. She was drenched in sweat. Eliza sat next to her, Calum in the passenger seat, both looking at her. 'You're safe,' Eliza said. 'What happened just now?' 'We were about to get more people in when you came out already,' Eliza replied. Ilesha looked in the rearview mirror. 'We don't think it was planned. It had all the characteristics of a spontaneous combustion. Like, someone in the crowd loses their balance, the next thinks that was a shove, takes the cue and starts to push, Jazz told me via com.' 'Where is Jazz?' 'In the car behind us.' 'Hm.' Back at the Compound, Alice was still too rattled to rejoin the boot camp. After a training session with Master Lee, and an unrestrained stick fight which Alice nearly won, she felt a little better and returned to the seventh floor for a briefing with Andy and Raiden. About an hour later, Heather (media) broke the news that the US, and independently some European countries, had launched campaigns to decry the town project as undemocratic. 'This might be lucky for us,' Alice remarked. 'If one or more European countries oppose us, then the UK might be inclined to work with us just to demonstrate that they have their own mind.' 'I fear that is wishful thinking,' Heather returned. 'The UK have a record of bending the knee to the US, which is incredibly embarrassing. You should think that the English have

enough pride to stand up to the US. But I haven't seen that happen, yet. It's moments like that that I'm glad I'm Welsh.' 'Hm,' Alice returned. 'I never got England's servility towards the US either.' 'We're not perfect,' Andy mumbled. 'Hm. Should we point out how undemocratic the European countries and the US are, and where their ideas of democracy have failed the people and the planet?' 'Better not,' Raiden said. 'We should test political approaches in our town first and substantiate our ideas.' Alice frowned. 'So we let them shout devil until our white wings are ready?' Raiden smiled a little. 'Religious imagery from you?' Andy chuckled. 'You don't have a fever, do you?' Alice smiled. 'Not a fever, only trouble keeping my anger and confusion in.' Just before midnight, the media assembled on the square in front of the Compound. A London reporter shook her head and said into the camera: 'What a bizarre scene. In the last three minutes thirty-seven of the hottest cars on this planet have been lining up to pick up their masters. So far there have only been rumours about the millionaires boot camps because those take place at a secret location, or locations. Except, today one boot camp took place here at this Compound. And any minute now the millionaires, among them three billionaires, will walk through this archway. Oh! We just got the signal that the millionaires and billionaires are close. And here they come - all talking. They seem to be in a good mood. Hi there! Any comments? What happened at the boot camp?' One millionaire stopped to speak with the London reporter, others responded to the calls of other reporters, some walked on to their cars. 'What happened at the boot camp?' the London reporter repeated. 'So simple, so invigorating: imagination, never knew the power of it.' 'So, what was it like?' 'Defying everything I ever knew! What a challenge! And the calm. So, I tell Alice Adler: Wow! You're so zen. And she bursts out laughing! So refreshing!

Authentic. A revelation!’ ‘OK. But what happened at the camp? What did you do?’ ‘No can tell. Don’t want to spoil it for the next participants. But this I can tell you: Everyone should go! Honestly. Time to scrap the crap we’ve been up to!’ Not four minutes later, several conspiracy theorists accused the town project of brainwashing. ⁽²³⁾ By the next morning, however, it was Skye who made the headlines. ‘Teeth welfare tells it all,’ says Skye Mattis, head of the town project’s Care Team, speaking at a hospital, yesterday. ‘Teeth welfare is a simple example of how medicine for profit incurs higher costs, lasting damage, and poorer health. But maybe that’s the aim: to make as much money of people’s ailments and insecurities as possible. Because if dental care was mandatory and for free, dentists would become unemployed by the thousands. We as a town project make it our mission to create a health system which has nothing to do with profit and everything with prevention and health education — to say nothing about education for doctors so they can get rid of their arrogance, get out of their professional bubbles, and we can finally restore some trust in the profession.’ Skye Mattis’ speech went viral, and some fifty-two percent of British citizens have by now voiced their agreement with her assessments, and more people have taken a look at the town project. Maybe Skye Mattis is right when she says: ‘We don’t want to promise anything, we want to find out whether our ideas can work. We need a whole town for this because everything is connected, from tooth to job to friends and more. To try fix only dental care means to overlook everything that got us into the teeth misery in the first place, starting with foods full of sugar, with our stressful lifestyles and with destructive, short-sighted profiteering.’ When Alice returned to the Compound, after giving a speech, she talked with Any, the head of THE, via video. ‘I thought you wanted to do more speeches.’ Any

remarked. 'I did. I do. But apparently I have to make myself scarce to seem more important.' 'And how is this coming along?' Alice shrugged. 'No idea. But I'm glad I have a moment to hear all the latest from the campaigns.' 'Your powers is doing very well,' Any said. 'Since its launch, a week ago, people have actually been testing their powers. And the Hub has set up an additional Your powers room for the exchange of power stories.' 'Wow, I didn't know that,' Alice said. 'I heard this story about a kid who loves ice cream. Only the ice-cream parlour on the street corner had horrible ice cream. So the kid rallies all their friends, they make a flyer, and they manage to convince everyone not to enter the parlour for a whole day, by the afternoon attracting the attention of a local paper. The next days, the parlour is closed. And when it opens again, it has, and I quote, "the best ice cream ever."' Any shook his head. 'I hadn't heard that story. My favourites are still the boycott flashmobs.' 'Of course they are your favourites. You help organise them.' 'Aye! I do.' 'I loved the one where that big festival opened their ticket sales, expecting to sell out in minutes, and no one bought a ticket while demanding that the festival divest from plastic, provide free water fountains and found solutions to use less and renewable energy.' Any nodded and said: 'I truly admired the fans for sticking together, and no one breaking the ranks. And it took the organisers only five days to present the fans with a convincing concept which meet all demands. Anyway, I have three favourites: the free chocolate flashmob boycotts against exploiting cocoa farmers, where millions of people stop buying chocolate at random flashmob times; the no streaming flashmob to protest against story recycling which reiterate outdated narratives; and the stop posting flashmob for all sorts of demands such as adjustable algorithms, or tax payments in the countries where the platforms earn their

money, or against labour exploitation by tech giants, especially in Africa, but also small things like more or fewer colour options.’ Alice chuckled. ‘I also love the end fast fashion protests where people stop their shopping process whenever it’s time for another flashmob boycott.’ ‘Oh, yes. That’s a good one, too.’ ‘It’s just a shame that the big tech companies, while shocked, seem to have decided to ignore these actions.’ ‘Yeah,’ Any said, a twinkle in his eyes. ‘It’s a child’s reaction. Something happens and you close your eyes in the hope that it will go away. By the way, the tech bros have announced to sue you for profit losses.’ ‘Really? I’m always shocked how little imagination they have.’ Any chuckled. ‘Well, according to them, you’re the big bad who incites customers to hurt themselves. They want to reveal the negative ripple effects of your so-called Your Powers Campaign because at the end of the day, customer power is an illusion. Customers are meant to consume what they’re served. If customers started asking questions or making demands, then they’d endanger the economic system which would result in unemployment and poverty.’ Alice sighed. ‘How did they get away with this silly narrative for so long?’ ‘By tapping into desires and fears.’ ‘Does Emine know about the lawsuits?’ ‘Not yet. She’s doing a speech with Dana, as we speak.’ ‘True.’ ‘But one of my people talked to her team and to Javiera. They say, we can use those lawsuits to strike back. But it would have to be a pretty harsh blow.’ ‘As in?’ ‘A counter-lawsuit which sues these companies for intimidation, false claims and justifications to keep ruining people’s lives and the planet.’ Alice pursed her lips. ‘It’s not that I don’t like the idea. It’s not even like I ain’t tempted to add a lawsuit for blowing billions for space travel and virtual reality fantasies while the planet collapses and people starve but— But this sounds pretty much like war. Could we formulate such a counterattack, send our draft to these companies and point

out that we'd rather not go into a full-blown fight because we're quite busy with a few other trifles?' Any nodded. 'Good plan! I might be able to add the odd blackmail.' 'About which I don't know anything.' 'Of course not. You and I are just business partners, and what I decide to do is my responsibility.' 'Freedom fighters with loaded cannons, someone once called you.' 'I'm happy to do the dirty work. And I will keep it to a minimum, knowing that you prefer other methods. But look at it like this: if you have mildew on the wall, you will have to remove it. Afterwards you can repaint the wall and take all the necessary precautions to prevent any new mildew from finding a way in.' Alice inhaled. 'Keep it to a minimum.' 'Will do. Are you up for a few tricky issues which have surfaced?' 'Fire away.' 'OK. The mayor of London and mayors of other cities seem to have noticed that their cities profit from the campaigns, and apparently they won't get upset about the campaigns any more — not least because your team are apparently "masters of cleaning up behind them." 'And that's tricky why?' 'The mayors are getting a lot of BS from MPs, the police and some of the public for consorting with the enemy.' 'Should we send the mayors a care packet with chocolate and fruits to cheer them up?' Any chuckled. 'No, I think we should let them be. This is their fight, not ours. But the campaign teams should beware that the greater freedom they might have from now on can easily be reversed.' Alice nodded thoughtfully. 'Anything else?' 'Yes. A group of millionaires have set up their own boot camps to — and I quote — to: "steel ourselves against being brainwashed by the town menace." 'Wow!' Alice said. 'Maybe Troy can do a comic to show the difference between being brainwashed and getting a few impulses on how to use one's imagination.' 'Not a bad idea. I'd also like a comic on the rise of the TOWN MENACE.' Alice laughed. 'Yeah. What else?' 'The millionaires boot

camp occasionally steels the show and gets a lot of coverage. Controversies, too, and some people are complaining that it's always about the rich.' Alice shrugged. 'That's on the corporate press. Ripples news hardly mentions the boot camps. And on the Hub Campaigns Square all events get attention. If the press chooses to be single-minded, then that's on them.' 'I hear you. But people still read the papers, and there are some who believe that the town is elitist.' Alice grimaced. 'OK. I'll talk to Heather. Maybe we can add some ads which focus on the 99% of our actions which address pretty much everyone.' 'I think it's important. Too many people believe that they always miss out.' Alice nodded. 'OK. Anything else tricky?' 'There are questions about how much money the campaigns spend, and where the money comes from.' 'Don't we publish the numbers?' 'Not yet. Apparently the teams don't have time to do the bookkeeping. And a lot is decided spontaneously.' 'I'll talk to Beatrice.' 'We already did. She says she can't help. Her team is overstretched, and they don't have time to recruit new people. But if someone recruits, could they have twelve more people for her?' 'She should have told me. Our international teams — Do we have people on our international teams who could help?' 'I hadn't thought of that.' 'I'll hand it to Jesse,' Alice said and frowned. 'But you know, don't you? You have our numbers.' Any pursed his lips. 'I'm not your accountant.' 'Any, I know that your trust issues are as severe as mine, and while we both chose to trust each other, I know that in your heart of heart you're afraid of me turning — and that's why you scrutinise me and the project constantly — to keep yourself and — I hope to keep me — safe. And that's why I know that you already have the numbers, and you would tell me if we were overspending or if there was anything dodgy going on.' Any grimaced. 'I'll have the numbers sent to Beatrice. And I'll get

her more people. And you're fine. And I'm sorry that I wasn't honest with you. Won't happen again.' Alice sighed a little. 'I hope you'll never turn, Any.' Any smiled. 'I can't. I'm the founder and the head of THE, but I, too, am bound by the THE codex. If I go rogue, I'm gone, and nothing I can do about it. And no, I can't give you a copy of our codex. You'll have to find your own. But when you have one, I'll take a look, and maybe I'll add a suggestions or two.' Frowning, Alice returned: 'Maybe the project needs several codices? One for us as team, to keep me and the other heads from causing harm, and one we develop during the experiment for the town.' 'You could start with a preliminary codex for the town. Like clay for a vase.' Alice smiled. 'Clay. I like that. Easy to shape. Easy to adjust.' Any smiled and looked at his other monitor. 'Ah, yes. I knew there was more. So on some different notes: There is a rush by businesses to get contracts with the Building Site Team for the building phase and for our new business stations.' 'Anything I can tell Seth?' 'No, Chico keeps him up-to-date from our side.' 'Thanks. What else?' 'The anti-town campaigns are increasing their reach.' 'Anything I can do?' 'Nah. All campaigns and the speeches get a lot of positive feedback. And your new counterattack team works closely with the fact-check team, and they are good.' Alice nodded. 'Anything else?' 'I received anonymous hints that several countries might move to demand to get a town built by your project, should the project succeed in the UK.' Alice shook her head. 'Bloody politics. I wish there was a way we could stay out of it and keep governments from using us as their beachball.' 'You mean the ball they keep throwing at the people they don't like?' 'Exactly. By the way, do you know to which constituency Jellybridge belongs and who the MP is?' 'Ah, you don't want to know. His name is Marcel Throb. He's determined to fight the town.' 'And when were you going to

tell me that?’ ‘You know my rule: I tell you what you need to know. Right now, you don’t need to worry about him. He isn’t influential.’ ‘Hm.’ This afternoon, the PLANTS AND FOODS DAY, organised by the YOUR POWERS CAMPAIGN dominated social media, and the following statements were in reposting loops and wildly discussed: YOUR POWER is the power to think, to envision, to question; YOUR POWER is the power to ask yourself why you do what; YOUR POWER is the power you have over your body; YOUR POWER is the power you have over your choices; YOUR POWER is the power you have to only buy what doesn’t cause harm; YOUR POWER is to only buy from companies who aren’t complicit in wars, exploitation or the like. YOUR POWER is the power you have to think about what it is you really need; YOUR POWER is the power you have to resist marketing; YOUR POWER is the power you have to plant wild plants, vegetables, fruits; YOUR POWER is the power you have to rewild the land, your roof, your balcony, you mind, your work, your life; YOUR POWER is the power to document and celebrate nature; YOUR POWER is the power to rethink pavements, facades, roofs; YOUR POWER is the power to decide to walk, go by bike, skate; YOUR POWER is the power to use public transport and trains; YOUR POWER is the power to shop fruits and vegetables with others; YOUR POWER is the power to cook. In the evening, Alice, Colin, Beatrice, Raiden, Andy and Leo met to review the application process for prospective towners. The aim was to open the applications forms directly after the site for the town was secured. Later this night, Emine sent the suggestions for a counterattack to the prosecutors, pointing out that the press conference, next day, would be suitable to announce a counter lawsuit. (22) At twenty minutes past five in the morning, Emine got the message that the lawsuits had been withdrawn without a comment, and a paper wrote: *Can*

someone press pause on the town project? Yesterday, the town team did nine speeches in three locations. Each intriguing, all published on their Hub Campaign Square. We understand why they keep pushing, but we wonder whether they won't lose the public due to sheer overload. So those of you, who can't or won't watch eighteen hours worth of speeches and interactions with the audiences, here some highlights. Once again, the former nurse, Skye Mattis, delivered a fierce and pointed speech, complemented by the softly spoken John Bergman, a business expert, who substantiated every claim with numbers from the project's research. Their main takeaway was: 'The only thing you can win by intertwining medicine with business is to incur higher costs and more misery, eventually resulting in the collapse of the health system. The way out is to end this destructive marriage and make healing as well as prevention the sole focus of medicine.' John Bergman then impressively explained that the town project will test whether it can't finance their medical sector via tourism, and whether the project's pharmaceutical company breathe and the project's other medical companies can't change the costs for medical care while at the same time further investigating what it is that makes us humans sick, and how sickness can be prevented in the first place.' At a different location, the team's tech expert Hayley Sniper, and their

education expert, the renowned Robin Hassan, delivered a masterclass in how education and tech can go hand in hand without becoming ubiquitous in people's lives. While the town project has top-notch tech and tech experts, it takes the view that life without tech is fantastic, and that tech is far too hyped, which becomes clear if we look at the damage it has already caused. Both speakers made it clear that the aim of the town was a tech balance with the focus on human welfare. Alice Adler, the head of the town project, and the lawyer Emine Hamdi, who has already made a name for herself beyond the project, engaged with the audience from the start, asking them to name laws the audience would like to have questioned. It was hilarious to see these two minds reimagine laws with a playfulness that made me understand the power of playing with ideas, of not getting stuck, of not just repeating what we learned. 'Playing with an idea is like stretching your muscles,' Alice Adler said, 'and as you keep stretching, you extend the range of your motions.' And that's something this project seems to do. It's not afraid to question what is, not even what could be. And what makes this team maybe most remarkable is their humanity and their obvious belief that we humans are not as bad as some would have us believe. At eight in the morning, the Q & As at the Front House Theatre and at Jellybridge started, and at ten, both locations hosted press conferences which focused on the announcement that: 'The

Hub's application room for prospective towners will open at midnight on April the first. Details regarding the criteria for the selection process has been published on our website and on the Hub this morning. We hope that everyone understands that the composition of the towners with respect to professions, age, gender, life choices and interests is part of the experiment.' Meanwhile another day full of campaign events was already well underway in twenty-one UK cities. This evening, Kahu and her friends celebrated the premiere of their first play: THE END OF ALL WARS on an open air stage at the Compound's sport fields. The play was one of the highlights of today's NARRATIVES CAMPAIGN which focused on the stupidest invention of humankind: waging wars. The campaign team took three main questions to the streets, to universities, to schools, on trains, to town halls, to workplaces: 'What is the record of this narrative? Does this narrative serve us? Is there a more beneficial narrative?' And they used these questions to scrutinise every narrative that related to war and to ending all wars. Many sets of questions and answers echoed far and wide. The most shared set was "Question: 'What is the record of waging a war?' Answer: 'Destruction, Loss, Traumata.' Question: 'Does war serve us?' Answer: 'Poets might find some inspiration in devastations and grief.' Question: 'Is there something that is more beneficial than war?' Answer: 'Everything.'" The second most shared set was this: "Question: 'What is the record of owning a gun?' Answer: 'Gun violence.' Question: 'Does owning a gun serve us?' Answer: 'No, since it incites gun violence.' Question: 'Is there a better alternative to owning a gun?' Answer: 'Rethinking our world.'" The third most shared set was this: "Question: 'What is the record of dominance?' Answer: 'Lost potentials. Lost prosperity. Lost opportunities. Frustration. Upheavals.' Question: 'Does dominance serve us?' 'No. There might be

a temporary sense of less anxiety for the dominating, but generally dominance stresses the dominating, and frustrates and holds back the dominated.’ ‘Is there a more beneficial narrative than dominance?’ Answer: ‘Several. Among them balance, collaboration, exploration, creating together, giving voice, unearthing the talents and potentials.’ This night, after the play, Kahu and Alice sat on the roof of the Back House for a break. ‘It’s a shame you missed the play,’ Kahu remarked, handing Alice a glass of red wine. Alice smiled. ‘I saw the audience leaving. Every one of them moved to the core, it seemed to me. And Bülent said, he wants to work with your team to make plays of all the other universe stories, you and your friends created, about how they ended the wars on their planets.’ Kahu smiled and clinked glasses with Alice, saying: ‘We need a lot more stories out there. I tried to find a movie to watch last night, and all I saw were reiterations of the old narratives, of the big evils and the great saviours. I think those stories are partly responsible for our planet’s troubles. And I fear we’ll need to break through the crust of these stories with thousand if not millions of new stories which paint a world where we use our minds, where we decide to create, to build, to nurture, where we have discovered ways to deal with the damages we carry and with those we inflicted.’ Alice smiled broadly. ‘Anything you need to make that happen, just tell me.’⁽²¹⁾ The next day, Skye (care) made the headlines again and was quoted with:

‘Body love. The problem with the usual approach to health is that we assume something is wrong with our bodies, and we have to fix them. And that makes a good relationship with our bodies bloody difficult. It’s much easier to get to know and love our bodies. That’s how we are motivated to take the best possible care of

ourselves.' **Another paper quoted Robin (education):**
'Talking about education includes talking about teacher's welfare and parent's welfare,' Robin Hussan, the renowned education researcher from Cairo and a member of the notorious town project, said yesterday in a speech. She noted that 'a safe and supportive home is the foundation of a good education. A well trained, strengthened and supported teacher is like sunshine entering through the windows, bringing light, warmth, vision and joy.' In the second part of her speech, Robin Hussan remarked: 'It will be a privilege to work with the schools in our town because we will be able to test different approaches to learning, and we will experiment with different kinds of content. One of the most exciting suggestions in my team is the question whether education could start with essentials: our bodies, how to look after our bodies, how to strengthen our bodies and minds, how to communicate, how to overcome fears, how to value mistakes and questions, how to build together, how to look after gardens together, how to get to know nature, how to connect to nature, how to explore, how to treat minor injuries, what to do in an emergency, how to find food, hunt and cook, how to identify herbs and use their medical properties. In short, all the things which will ensure that we are connected to our bodies and our welfare, to our fellow pupils, to our habitat. Learning to read,

training to do sums, talking about the stories of the past and the present can be done as an add-on. But those pieces of knowledge aren't nearly as important as understanding that every mind needs a healthy body, that empowering each other bears the most delicious fruits, and that being part of nature is where we are at home.' **Ripples news, the project's paper, focused on today's main theme: The CRAFTS DAY, and Tabansi wrote:** TRUE POWER IS IN CREATION is the title of one of the town project's seven campaigns, and maybe today it will leave its most powerful mark yet. Across the UK, the campaign team prepared more than a hundred thousand events for their CRAFTS DAY. The events cover a multitude of layers, directions, depths, widths. But there are some key directions distinguishable: How do the crafts transform our lives? Our lives as the person who is connected to the creation and shaping process, as the person who is connected to sourcing materials for the crafts, as the person who is connected to someone who is connected to the crafts, as the person who sees, sells or buys a crafted item? And also: How do active crafts workshops transform a family, a home, a street, a neighbourhood, a community? Another direction explores lost, past, existing and future crafts with over a hundred roadshows which all start today, and which provide a chance to apply for a spot in the future town's crafts community. A

related direction, and one of the big highlights, are seventy-seven pop-up workshops of the town project's company Original Instruments. In tents craftspeople and the public will build instruments together, and in all spots it will also be possible to make music on location. Similar events are organised by other project businesses such as dot. where people can create new clothes with designers and tailors on location, or toys around the world, where craftspeople and the public will build toys and games together, or two wheels who will introduce a new concept for building bicycle, or hidden doors, the project's furniture company. All workshop tents can be found via the Hub Campaign Square. Some events will be more theoretical, such as the discussions about automatisisation and digitalisation. On which subject I got a quote from Roger, head of the town project's Crafts Team: 'I don't mind when some tasks are easier thanks to a machine. I do mind if people don't grasp any of the basics any more because all they ever knew are machines. It's that thing with the brain I learned on this project: you've got to use the brain. That's how it can learn to discover things, how it can become a creator. If all the brain knows is to push buttons, then it will only ever be a pusher, not a creator. But, and I want you to quote me on this: "The human is a creative creature. Take that away, take the creating

and the creativity away, and you take away an essential part of being human." You see, it's part of who we are: creating. We are not made to be pushers who answer to blinking plastic. We are made to create and build.' I could't agree more. All the layers I mentioned so far focus specifically on the crafts. To add another layer, the campaign team will disarm the myth of dominance and competition, show the negative effects of both, and then illustrate the power of creation, the power of shaping, the power of cooperation, the power of balance and diversity. For this the campaign team have devised a game, not unlike a paper chase or scavenger hunt, which allows the participants to experience the negative effects of competition and exploitation, and the positive effects of cooperation and empowerment. Related to this layer, the team also uses several simulations to illustrate the benefits of using everything humanity has to offer instead of letting a few people get everything wrong. Also related is another series of events titled: Dominance and Competition meet Space and Cooperation. These events are an invitation to writers, journalists, visual artists and scientists to explore what it is like to create space and opportunity for their fellow humans. What is it like to give voice to others, to find and unearth potential in others. Who are those others? Anyone. Random strangers on the street. People who find these events.

Someone on the Hub. Yet another string of events will take us even deeper into probing our attitudes, our mindsets by using open-mic events where common power attitudes are replaced with: For not against, Us not them, Creating not competing, Unearthing not controlling. TRUE POWER IS IN CREATION. We have, for far too long, been told that we must compete, that we must seek power over others, that we must dominate. Today, over a hundred thousand events will write new stories. Stories of how much potential we have, of how much energy we release when we empower, of how invincible we will feel when we create and experience the effects of our creations on others. What good is a power that drains everything around it and forgoes everything the world has to offer? I agree, to destroy, to repress, to violate is no power at all, it's stupidity, cowardice and the lack of vision and wisdom. True power is in creation, true power empowers, true power unearths, true power inspires.' In the late afternoon, Phoenix Dragonfly remarked on radio 7: 'Today, the town project surpassed itself — again. I used to tinker when I still had a bit of time to spare. But today is the first time ever that I feel a tingling in my fingertips, and they tell me: Give me something to shape, something to mould, something to create. It's madness. Amazing madness. Our world has become so obsessed with ever more products, ever faster and cheaper— Hell, we have lost our minds! We've lost our creativity! We have lost the chances to be creators. To be powerful. Hell, I want to move into that bloody town! Anyway, there are so many Crafts Day events,

and so many stories coming in, I guess we'll have days of— Oh, hang on, there're new campaigns coming tomorrow. Hell, how is one supposed to keep up with all this fantastic, mind-blowing, wonderfully inspiring, finger tingling stuff? I know what we need! MUSIC!' In the evening, the Campaigns & Negotiations Team hosted a party for hundreds of interested players, including business people, politicians, scientists, academics, religious people, lawyers, judges, actors, activists, writers and journalists. Rohana's people had transformed the atrium of the Compound's Central Building for the party, using both the Oceans Bar and the Cliff Restaurant, and having repurposed the reception into a bar, too. The mood lights on the floor and at the bar, and the candles on the tables gave the atrium a cosy, relaxed atmosphere. Throughout the atrium were buffet islands, each island catering to a cuisine or to a taste, like the fruits bar or the sweets buffet. Also throughout the atrium, bar tables, sofas and armchairs invited to chat, and a dance floor was open for business and fun, next to the Oceans Bar. A little out of place but discretely placed were some thirty small tables with computers, which could be used to view simulations, campaign spots, and to find information on the project. At first Alice, Jack and Rohana played the welcome team, having a laugh with each other and with the arriving guests. Then Alice opened the evening with a short speech. *And that was that*, Alice thought some two hours later. Rohana's team had done such a good job that everyone seemed to find a spot where they were comfortable, and chatting or dancing with someone. There was a joviality about that was quite a change to some of the attacks the project had had to stomach. *Food, drink and music*, Alice thought. *These things put us at ease*. Alice chuckled. *Maybe if we just always ate, drank and danced, we wouldn't get quite as much wrong*. 'Alice Adler?' 'Yes?' Alice said, turning

to face three stern looking people. 'Could we have a word in private?' Alice nodded, thinking: *There are probably always some spoilsports, no matter how good the food, drinks and music.* Meanwhile, other members of the team experienced a variety of conversations, though quite a few of them would have confirmed this general sense of joviality. Among those were in Skye (care), Heather (media) and Robin (education) who had joined the Campaigns & Negotiations Team as jokers, pokers and sanity checkers, and who had, by now, a strong fanbase, not least among the guests. 'I'm just not made for parties and networking,' Andy said to John as they watched Skye, Robin and Heather shine in the crowds. 'Nor am I. I really thought we had an ideal campaigns team. But now I think, we should have had more party people on the team.' Andy chuckled. 'I wonder why Jack is so reserved. I'd have thought he's a party person.' John shrugged. 'I guess this isn't his crowd, except for his few acquaintances.' 'Hm. Where is Alice?' 'She went to her office with three people. They looked like politicians.' 'Erm, excuse me. Are you John Bergman?' a woman in a black dress asked. 'I am.' 'You are said to be critical of Alice Adler.' John raised his eyebrows. 'It's my job to be critical of her. It's why she asked me on this team. But unfortunately she is one of those people who listen, think and reevaluate when she hears a convincing argument. So I never get a chance to be critical of her or her ideas for long.' The woman frowned and left. John sighed. 'Am I really such a buzzkill?' Andy shrugged. 'I'll get us a drink.' (20) The next morning a media comment read: 'The town project knows how to host a party. Apparently they used to have parties every Friday, just to hang out together. Is that strange or actually a good thing once you have stripped your teams of competitive and bullying behaviour?' **A social media commentator**

posted: 'Alice Adler disrespectful in conversation with three outstanding political advisors. One of them confirms that the town project needs to be stopped.'

'What happened?' Jack asked Alice during their early morning voice training. Alice grimaced. 'I need to get better at speaking loud with a deep voice. If I get too angry, my voice gets weird and high pitched.' 'Alice, what happened?' 'I told them to fuck off. They were some of those lobbyist fuck ups. The worst kind of spoiled rich brats who think they own the world and who obviously have never had a single original thought in their lives. They are not real. They are weird. I don't think they know how to use their brains. And—'

Alice paused. 'I think, they are sick. They had to come in a pack of three to intimidate—'

'—what?' Jack interrupted.

'Alice, what happened?' 'Nothing! If you can call words nothing. By the time I began to shout, THE already entered the office. They monitor my pulse, as you know, plus they listened in. They walked the little brats out of the building.'

'Alice, I—'

'It's OK. I'll try to remember to do even number talks. If they bring two, so will I.'

'Maybe you should take off some hours. We could go out. Just for a few hours. Give you a break.'

Alice shook her head. 'No. But talking helped a little. Thanks. And—'

'—I know. But I need you to know something.'

'OK?'

'No matter what I do, where I am, I'm always available.'

At seven the CONNECTIONS CAMPAIGN's Connections Day began on three-hundred and thirty-three trains across the UK. In an unlikely cooperation with British Rail, the campaign took over all tasks which used to be performed by humans. At eight, on the Hub, the ticket sales for the town project's conference in May opened. Around nine, at the Compound, Dennie, Skye and Robin pulled the sanity check card and insisted on a long workout, massages for everyone, and on a three hours brunch with

no mention of any sort of work. That was why the team missed the news that at eleven past eleven, all public tickets for the conference, several ten thousands, were sold. Just after noon, a journalist reported from the Connections Day, writing: This campaigns valid points are: If you buy your ticket from a person every day, you form a connection. If another person helps you to get your luggage or shopping from the train to the bus, you forge a connection. If actual people announce the next station, they can do so with humour which relates to today's weather, news, or the full train – and you get a connection between driver, staff and travellers, which is only fair since they are all on the same train. And if you have either bars or snacks trolleys, you have potential connections between travellers and sellers. And if you bring musicians, storytellers or thinkers, then tired travellers might dance, laugh or think together. And as I write this, I hear people shout: 'But who will pay for all this?' And here the town project shows just how well prepared they are for experiments. They calculated the costs of fitting trains with digital displays, electronic doors and blinking lights, and included maintenance costs and replacements. Those costs are way higher than, to quote: 'giving people a job that creates connections.' And they added: 'Besides, humans are not made to be efficient. They are made to connect, to live and laugh.' In the afternoon, Alice and Raiden left London for Jellybridge. || **days 20-18** || March, 12-14 ||

Jellybridge Estate II Alice and Raiden reached Jellybridge House in the early evening and met with Ethan, head town planner, to discuss the underground town and the town's underground transport system as well as the networks for plumbing and cables. The big question was: How deep and far to dig and what to prioritise? Alice looked thoughtful and said: 'We need to figure out a way to build only a minimum underground now, but do so in a way so we can extend the tunnel network later and easily.' 'Why not build all now?' Ethan challenged. 'It's not important enough,' Alice returned. 'I want us to focus on the core elements of the town. Besides, it's a lot of work, and we don't even know whether we really want underground traffic. What if we find out that avoiding traffic completely is the better option?' Ethan shook his head. 'Because of the peculiarities of the site, we had to move the Gods Garden far away from the tourist area, contrary to our original plans for which we wanted to make the garden easily accessible to visitors. Also, the Roof Gardens are much further north now. But with an underground which runs the same course as the wall, along our outer circle, we can reconnect the tourist area to some of the town's hotspots like the Roof Gardens, the Party Den, the Main Gate, the Gods Garden. This line would even ensure that not all tourist cross the town but stay in the outer circle to get to these places without bothering the towners.' 'Hm.' Alice mumbled, frowning. A little impatiently, Ethan continued. 'We'll dig deep in key spots of the town for the foundations of the Yards, for the Roof Gardens which will have the highest buildings and below which we want to build the underground town and—' Alice interrupted. 'Only we have a lot more space at this site and don't actually need the underground. It was a fun idea. But it's a lot of work.' Ethan shook his head. 'The argument for the underground still holds: we want to test whether we can use the underground

in a healthy way so that more of the ground can be left to nature. I think that's an important experiment and we shouldn't forego it. Alice, I know that you want to complete the town in a neck-breaking time, and I'm with you. But all our underground ideas are good and worthwhile testing. And since we'll have to dig deep anyway for all the foundations of the higher buildings, including our main library, we are deep down already. We won't get a better chance than the early stage of the building phase to carve a network of tunnels for transport of goods, for the electric railpods the public can use along the main lines, for the emergency line for our medics, plus we can use these tunnels for our plumbing and our cables which makes them easily accessible in case of repairs. And Alice, we can easily close the tunnels if we want to test what it's like not to have them. But we can't easily build them at any other time.' Alice exhaled noisily. 'OK, talk me through it.' Underground line 1: WALL LINE, starting next to Jellybridge Road in the south, and going from gate to gate, second stop Explorers Gate, third stop Yards Gate, fourth stop Main Gate, fifth stop: Gardens Gate, sixth stop: Apple Gate, seventh stop: Party Gate, eighth stop: Pilgrims Gate, ninth stop: Cherry Gate and the last stop Camping Gate; YARDS CIRCLE LINE, starting at the train station, second stop: the warehouses outside of town. These two stops are only for product transports. The public line starts at the Yards Gate, circling from one Yards complex to the next, third to seventh stop: Yards one to five, which are close to five of the educational squares. Eighth stop back at the Yards Gate; between the first and the last Yards complex there is an emergency stop at the General Hospital; the ROOF GARDENS LINE connects the caves of the underground town and has stops near the Challenge Garden, at the Party Gate, near one of the educational squares, which borders on the Roof Gardens, and one at

the intersection between Cherry Circle and Gardens Road. There should be a connection between the Yards Line and the Roof Gardens line unless we count the Wall Line as connection. And that's it.' 'How about we extent the ROOF GARDENS LINE to connect to the General Hospital and with that to the Yards Line?' Alice asked, smiling a little. 'You're the boss,' Ethan returned. 'And I like it.' Raiden nodded and said: 'I remember an idea where we use the top part of a tunnel for emergency transports.' 'Yes,' Ethan said. 'My team is discussing both ideas at the moment. Idea one, several tunnels on top of each other, or idea two, split one tunnel into several sections.' Raiden nodded and asked: 'Would the emergency network cover the whole town?' 'We cover the most densely populated areas. The town centre can use the clinics above the centre, and the people furthest away from the buzz are still close to the Yards Circle Line. And we are thinking of First Aid units at all educational squares.' Alice nodded. 'On a side note,' she said. 'Have you talked about the names for the educational squares?' 'On and off. Without results.' 'Hm. I think we should treat the squares like the streets, and not name them after people who have a meaning for us but who might not have a meaning for future generations — with the exception of Socrates and Da Vinci because they have contributed to the spirit of the town.' 'Good thinking,' Ethan returned. 'What could it be? Flowers? Animals?' Alice shrugged. 'How about the elements? Water Square, Fire Square, Earth Square, Air Square, plus Socrates Square and Da Vinci Square?' Ethan smiled. 'I'm in.' 'Me too,' Raiden said. 'And I wonder whether we shouldn't have underground connections to the Central Square and the clinics' area above the square.' Ethan frowned. 'Well, we said that the town's centre and the clinic's area above the square should be a walking and wheelchair area alone. But, what do you have in mind?' 'Two more

lines,' Raiden returned. 'THE FOLD LINE crossing the town from north to south and connecting with the start and the finish of the WALL LINE thereby constituting a WALL/FOLD CIRCLE LINE. There should be some additional rails at the overlap points, and people can choose to get out or to continue to the FOLD LINE. Plus this line could later be extended to include a station at Jellybridge House.' Alice nodded. 'Sounds good. What your second line?' A CENTRAL LINE which would have three stops in the clinics area, then a stop between Central Square and The Senses Garden, one at the south corner of Central Square, the next two on Central Avenue, first at the crossing with Elder Circle, then at the crossing with Beech Circle, connecting to the YARDS CIRCLE LINE, next stop connects to the ROOF GARDENS LINE, next stop the main library, next back to Central Avenue corner Lime Circle, next the General Hospital, then Main Gate, the train station and as last stop the underground car parking spaces for towners and tourists.' Alice smiled. 'OK. Now I'm hooked. And I'll add a line, too. The EXPLORERS LINE, mainly for tourists, running from the underground car park to the train station, from there to the Explorers Gate and then it stops along the Explorers Road and runs all the way to Central Square or even as far as the clinics where this line could again connect to the CENTRAL LINE, creating the CENTRAL/EXPLORER CIRCLE LINE. Raiden chuckled. 'You want the town to sit on a big Swiss cheese?' Alice and Ethan laughed. And Ethan said: 'It will be safe. And it will mean less stress on nature and on the people above ground because quite a portion of people will be travelling underground. It will also make maintenance for our sewage, waste and cable networks easier because these pipes will be more accessible.' Alice and Raiden nodded, and Ethan added: 'Due to the railpods we use underground, there will be enough traffic on the lines

so that we can easily redistribute the energy regenerated by braking railpods. In fact, if we build all suggested lines, then the activities along the rails will contribute to the town's energy needs.' 'By braking with the railpods?' Alice asked. 'Exactly that's when energy is generated and the Tech Innovations Team suggests to build multiple receivers: on the pod itself, for the lights along the lines and at the stations, for passing pods and in batteries, especially at stations. The stored energy can then be used either in town or at times of low traffic.' 'Hm. How large would the railpods and the tunnels be?' Alice asked. 'A railpod has the width of an armchair, seventy centimetres, and it will have a kind of loading deck at the back for luggage or shopping bags. The pod is open, and you have a steering wheel. Most of the tunnels would have two tracks so that railpods can pass each other and it will be possible to change direction at stations.' 'And the stations are built like half a roundabout?' Raiden asked. 'Yes, you can pass a station with your railpod, or if you want to get off, you slow down, drive to the left into the station and park your pod along a kind of jetty, where up to five pods can be parked on either side of each jetty. If you want to drive on, you choose a railpod and either follow the half-circle to the end and join the line again, or you use the bridge to walk to the other side and pick a railpod there. According to the simulation, there will always be railpods available and everyone is independent of schedules.' Raiden frowned. 'I'll take a look at the simulation. We know from car traffic that individual cars congest streets, busses who transport the same number of people don't cause congestions. Why would this be different underground?' Ethan grimaced. 'I don't know. Can you check this. Because our simulation suggested that it would work without congestions and with a higher level of satisfaction because people are independent of schedules and have their own

space in the pod.’ Raiden nodded. ‘I’ll take a look. Maybe it works because our town is a walkers town and transport is only attractive or necessary when luggage is involved.’ Ethan’s eyes lit up. ‘That sounds familiar. But, please, I’m a big fan of the simulations and of being careful.’ ‘Will do.’ ‘What about dangers in those pods,’ Alice asked. ‘There is the high voltage. But the tech people say, it will be as safe as it gets. Plus the pods don’t go faster than twenty-four miles per hour. The town doesn’t need high speed, and we’re not about high speed. The underground is about convenience, about transport, and about having fewer people on the ground.’ ‘So it’s a fun fair feel to get from A to B when you need to or when you have luggage?’ Ethan chuckled. ‘Yes. That’s it. Apart from all the transports of goods from the workshops and factories in the yards to the warehouses and the train station. But, yes, there is a fun fair element intended. And the Tech Team and the Ecology Team wanted a transport network that is efficient while at the same time using as few resources as possible — which was actually one of the arguments against building trains, I now remember. The railpods have no shenanigans and only need little power to get going and to keep going, and while going they generate power. The tunnels will have a minimum widths, plus space for the town’s plumbing and cables. The stations will obviously be larger and the underground town will have several big caves. But most of the network is easy to build, because we will only use much of those tunnels with small railpods.’ ‘What about families?’ Raiden asked. ‘They can hitch several pods together. Plus, remember we said we wanted a transport system for goods. One of the tech people came up with the idea of using something like a conveyor belt which runs below the train tracks.’ ‘And those tracks lead to some collection point?’ Alice asked. ‘Yes. Each station has a scanner and when a package has reached its

destination it gets pushed down to a second track which in turn lands in a container in a locked bay. Is a container full, then someone gets notified, and the container is lifted to the surface.' Alice rubbed her forehead. 'I'd like this, all of this, in writing and with sketches. Have we ordered a tunnel boring machine?' 'A small one. Two more would be good, especially a big one for the underground town.' It was nearly ten at night, when Alice, Ethan and Raiden met with Daria, Noel, Light and Jokull in the basement to take a look at an early version of the underground network simulation and to discuss apps the team was developing to coordinate the building site teams and everyone else on the site. Some hours later, Alice found her room on the first floor, slipped into the large fourposter, ⁽¹⁹⁾ and a few hours later she woke up again, dawn already underway. On a whim, Alice got out of bed, dressed quickly, left the house and hurried to the stables, just as the first rays of sunshine touched the roofs. Jimmy, the master of horses, was waiting for her with a cup of tea. 'How did you know?' Jimmy, who was in his fifties, blond, as tall as Alice, and on the slim muscular side, smiled. 'I cheated. I asked your security team to let me know when you left the house. That gave me just enough time to get the water boiling. I had an inkling that you might want to go for a ride before the day swallows you. I saw your schedule.' Alice smiled. 'That's— Thank you! And thank you for the tea.' 'It's my pleasure. I'm glad you came because the site has a surprise for you, and Marla is saddled. Would you mind if I came?' 'Not at all.' A short while later, Alice and Jimmy rode past Jellybridge House and some lawns, entered the Young Forest, followed the track north and came to an abrupt halt at the fringe of the forest. Alice was stunned. Spring had transformed the land into a paradise of flowers of all colours and forms. It was amazing. And the smell— the smell was hypnotising, and her senses danced with the joy and

potency of spring, of becoming. Alice took a long, deep breath in. As she exhaled slowly, she let her gaze wander across the rolling meadows, the hill, the lake, the fold, the fringes of the forests. Marla swished her tail. 'How can we preserve this?' Alice said, half to herself. 'You will find a way,' Jimmy replied confidently. Alice chuckled. 'Maybe we already have. We can put all the plants on our roofs. No one says we can't have gardens on every roof — in which case we simply elevate the landscape and slip our houses under it.' Jimmy smiled. 'You will find a way.' When Alice and Jimmy rode back and reached the other side of the Young Forest again, Jazz, head of Project Security, and Anthony, head of Building Site Security, also on horses, came towards them. They had news: protesters were arriving in busses, vans and cars at Jellybridge House. 'I can see them,' Jimmy said, frowning. 'It's under control,' Anthony returned. 'We have enough security here, and we cordoned off the space around the fountain, in front of the main entrance, so they have a dedicated spot where they can stage their protest.' 'Who are they?' Alice asked as they all rode on towards the house. 'The protest is financed by our neighbour, the old lord who owns the coastline and who is furious about the town project. Some protesters are local farmers who are afraid of competition from the town, others are locals who are afraid of the masses of people who will suddenly be in their neighbourhood, some are from further away, conservative groups who think the town project has dangerous ideas, others seem to be paid by lobbyists, we're still checking their backgrounds, and some are worried about consequences for the environment if the town is built here. And the protesters brought a few anti-town journalists. Oh, I nearly forgot, there are also some conspiracy theorists who brought cameras, and who posted online that they will go snooping around the place to find the hidden weapons, drugs, orphans and race

horses.’ Alice shook her head. ‘That is literally crazy.’ ‘It is,’ Jimmy said thoughtfully. ‘But we’ll bring them soup and tea. That’s the only way to make a difference: treat them like humans and give them a chance to see that their fears are unfounded. Leave it to me and Betsy and our people and Security.’ Alice exchanged a glance with Jazz who nodded and said. ‘Don’t worry about the protesters. But there is more.’ ‘Oh?’ ‘See that group of suits that’s waiting at the foot of the steps to the front door.’ ‘Yes?’ ‘They are politicians from London who were at the party in the atrium, two days ago.’ ‘Oh?’ ‘They want to talk to you.’ Some minutes later, Alice got off Marla near the group of politicians. The moment her feet touched the ground, the protesters around the fountain began to call for the shutdown of the town project, but Alice didn’t get to wonder whether she should respond or not because one of the politicians addressed her. ‘Alice Adler! Good morning! You’ll remember us from your party.’ ‘Good morning. I do. Good to see you again.’ ‘Well, our visit here is strictly unofficial, and we’re not making any promises. You can think of us as thorough servants of our country, and as such we have brought a list of topics which might come up should the government at any point decide to enter negotiations — which at this point is highly unlikely. And we thought it was ideal to meet you here so we can discuss our points on location to—’ At this point, Alice interrupted, with a smile. ‘—Thank you for coming. And thank you for being thorough. However, I have an extremely tight schedule today. And I’d like to refer you to Kojo and Amahle, our media people for the Building Site Team. I’m sure they can arrange some meetings with members of the town project team. If you wanted to stay the night or came back tomorrow, I could meet you at seven in the morning for two to three hours.’ The politicians weren’t happy. But when, shortly afterwards, Kojo and Amahle mentioned coffee and

breakfast in the morning room, the politicians' mood improved. By that time, Alice was in a meeting with the Building Site Team to resolve a major disagreement regarding the future of the fold. Apparently, the town team had entangled itself in ideas of how to use this elevation which offered a perfect view to the east and the west and connected the Young Forest in the south with the Old Forest in the north. The most radical idea was to have only gardens along the fold, with a corridor for wildlife, while the two parts of the town would be connected via tunnels through the fold. Others wanted, at least, the library to keep its planned spot on the fold. And some suggested to use elevated walkways on the fold as tracks for hikers. These walkways could be integrated into some smaller buildings, possibly on stilts, for cafés and artist studios along the way, while leaving the ground to animals and plants. After listening to all suggestions, Alice, her eyebrows raised, said: 'Your ideas sound great, and they are in keeping with our goal to reconnect to nature. But listening to you I thought, we are kidding ourselves. We cannot pretend that we're not building a town. Covering the fold in great gardens is not a way of redemptions for having ten-thousands of people suddenly occupying the space left and right of the gardens. A town is a town, a unit. Not something that is separated. Besides, I am a Berliner, you really can't ask me to agree to separating our town into a west and an east side.' Some chuckled, others smiled, Alice continued. 'Our task is to build a town in a way that coexisting with nature is possible. What exactly that will look like is something we want to find out. But cutting off a chunk of our town to leave it to nature is not coexisting. At best it's being neighbours. To coexist we have to find a way to share space without causing too much damage. I like the idea of corridors, though. Maybe the corridors could be winding along the fold, parts of them elevated to let walkers

pass, or the other was around, or both. And there is another point. We want to find out how we can build a town where community life is a natural byproduct. And I guess for that, all our spaces in town need to be connected. If I have to walk through a large forest to get to my grandmother, I'll think of a scary fairy tale and won't be wrapped in a town's connecting atmosphere. And just in case, one more point: Not one of our circle roads runs for a full circle in our new plans, which is fine and a bit funny, but to cut our partial circle into halves contradicts the whole idea of our three-thirds-of-a-cobweb town layout.' Ethan, head of the Town Planning Team, let out a long sigh. 'I didn't see the Berlin wall angle. But that does it for me.' Jason, head of the Architecture Team, nodded and asked. 'Then what are we going to do with the fold?' Alice flicked back a few pages in the folder before her. 'Let's take a look at the early version on page seven. I'll start in the north. The fold begins in the Old Forest, outside of town, and rises along the river, River Aros. As the fold emerges from the forest, we come to the space for the Camping Garden which would have to go somewhere else if we left the fold alone. But if it stays, then The Camping Garden is nicely nestled between the slope of the fold and the lake.' 'Thank you, Alice!' Kim, head of the Landscape Architecture Team, said and added: 'I agree, this is a perfect spot for the Camping Garden, and this way it can connect to the Common Garden and is close to the town centre. All other options made the Camping Garden look like an intrusion and out of place. But below the lake, next to the river, with the fold. It's perfect.' Megan, head of the Agriculture Team, sighed. 'OK, you win. And maybe you're right, Alice. I find myself pushing the town away, instead of asking how town and nature can be intertwined.' Alice smiled. 'You have done intertwining before, Megan. You'll find it again.' 'Thanks, and carry on.' 'OK. Next. The fold

would be home to the last and lower buildings of the Roof Gardens. It should be interesting to use the natural levels of the land in combination with the different heights of the Roof Gardens buildings. We want the Roof Gardens to be an assembly of buildings, resembling half a mountain integrated into the outer wall — and with the fold, our building mountain gets another wave or even another peak. Next to these fold Roof Gardens buildings there is some space, maybe for another garden, maybe just wild land, and it's crossed by the Gardens Road. Then we have the library, our central building with bell tower and a garden around it with a perfect view of the lake. From here the fold curves a little to the south/east, and I'd like to keep the roundabout where Central Avenue crosses Cherry Circle, for the view down to the lake.' Alice stopped and massaged her temples. 'The Yards. I wasn't aware that two of the Yards complexes run across the fold in this version. Hm.' Ethan nodded. 'With our redbrick design for the Yards, we would make those sites highly visible on the fold, they'd be as dominant as the library or the highest of the Roof Garden buildings.' 'But we have other options,' Jason said. 'On page twelve, you find the idea of locating these two Yards buildings at the foot of the fold. Alternatively, on page twenty, you have the buildings only on the slopes and a connection via a tunnel.' 'Hm. Let's look at the educational squares first,' Alice said. 'Two of the six educational squares could be on the fold. And that would be very fitting because of the view, the connection to the library, even though they have their own libraries. But still, the designs of those squares fit into the other fold buildings' designs, most of them sandstone and timber. What if we nudge the Yards complex just a bit to the west, so that their main structure is on the west side of the fold, closer to the town centre? And we'd have smaller Yards buildings for workshops and apprentice accommodations along the slop

and across the fold. And would could adjust the design of those buildings to that of the other fold buildings.’ Jason eyes had an excited gleam. ‘We could use smaller buildings on the top of the fold, which perfectly fit into the fold design theme, and as the Yards slope down, they fade into the red-brick design. We could even integrate some redbrick into a timber design.’ ‘That sounds great,’ Alice said. ‘And that leaves the question of the last part of the fold. And here I’m tempted to opt for gardens rather than buildings — and now I have your fold fever, too, and ask, what if we kept the fold free of homes?’ Ethan and Megan chuckled. ‘And push the Roof Gardens further east?’ Megan teased. Alice shook her head, smiling. ‘Damn. I see how you got there, and that this will need more thinking.’ ‘You made valid points,’ Megan said. ‘And maybe the best takeaway from our fever is to focus on the towners. What do they need, what enhances the chances of a vibrant community life? And when we get too much into a fever on that side of the scale, we’ll focus more on coexisting with nature again.’ ‘You’ve got me cooled down,’ Alice said, smiling. Not much later, Alice, Ethan (town planning), and Megan (agriculture) met with the tree replanting experts to discuss which trees along the planned roads had the best chances of surviving an excavation and a relocation, and which spots were suited for replanting the trees. The experts agreed that the Old Forest trees would have the best chances on the west side of the river, thereby extending the Old Forest in the west. They also suggested an area above the stream not far from the foot of the hill. Regarding the trees of the Young Forest, they said that some trees wouldn’t have to be moved far, since the Young Forest had some natural gaps, and the borders around Jellybridge House were also suitable as new locations. ‘If you really are flexible with the layout of your roads, then we can keep the replanting to a minimum.’ ‘We are,’ Megan

said. 'Wherever we can, the trees have priority.' At noon Alice, Beatrice (head of admin) and Leo (Alice's assistant) met with a group of regional majors again. A lot had happened since the day by the lake, thirteen days ago, in particular thanks to the project businesses. The meeting was jovial and further enhanced by Betsy's delicious lunch, which they took in one of the orchards behind Jellybridge House, not far from the large kitchen garden and far enough away not to hear the protesters who had declined the offer of food. 'They have no idea what they are missing,' one of the mayors said. 'Honestly, your kitchen is the best,' another remarked. Alice smiled lopsidedly. 'I wouldn't call Betsy a kitchen. She's more like a soul. The most generous soul I've ever met.' 'Tell me,' another mayor said. 'Did your project empower your cook?' Today's focus campaign was the BENEFITS OF EMPOWERMENT, so Alice knew where this question came from and said: 'Funny enough, I'd say no and yes. Betsy is a complete person in the sense that there is nothing that holds her back or that she holds back. She *is* — in the best possible sense. But through our presence here, she has the opportunity to spread the fullness of her being, of her potentials further. She has more impact. In that respect, there is the kind of empowerment we're in a position to give her new stages to be all she is.' 'Interesting.' Another mayor nodded and said: 'I was shocked by the lost chances simulations. And I only saw three of them.' 'I haven't seen them,' the mayor sitting next to Alice remarked. 'I wouldn't recommend it,' the first returned. 'The campaign team published simulations, singling out oppressive actions in the past and illustrating what could have been if people hadn't been held back.' 'Such as?' 'If you must know, I watched the one about colonies. That's horrible. All these lives, chained, their potentials buried forever. England would not be as rich as it is, but the world would have been a lot richer and more

advanced if we as humans had focused on asking which talents everyone has and not which colour of skin. It still gives me the shivers.’ ‘I watched the rape simulation,’ another mayor said. ‘I never even thought about how much lasting damage a rape can cause, and how many people, women, men, children got and get broken, and how much progress the world forwent and still forgoes by allowing abuse to prevail.’ ‘I watched the one about war. Gruesome, too. But that simulation suggested something surprising. If there had been no wars, and people had focused on creating instead of destroying, the world population wouldn’t have exploded, and humanity would be much more advanced. The reasoning is: if every person is allowed to be all they are and if they can use all their talents, then more research could have been completed, and only people who care about bringing up children would have had them. And if the population hadn’t exploded this much, our habitat wouldn’t be nearly as close to collapse as it is now. And the simulation suggests that pushing for more children is the policy of warmongers because, and I quote: ‘War eats children and war needs full coffers, which means warmongers need tax payers.’” Another mayor looked at Alice: ‘Your other campaigns aren’t quite as dark.’ ‘True. We were intrigued by the comparison between what is, what could have been and what could be. But we didn’t expect the results to be this dark. On the other hand, the simulations reveal the vast potentials of what each human has to offer. Plus, we added simulations for the future. For example, what is possible tomorrow if we empower every human today?’ ‘And what is?’ ‘According to the simulation: everything. It really got me when I saw the first of these future simulations. Because at the end of the day, everything is simple. We just have to want it. And we have to put in the work to strip ourselves off old narratives and find the narratives that serve

us. No one wins by dividing the world into genders and by making out that one is better than the other. No one wins by dividing the world into races and making out that one is better than the other. No one wins by dividing the world into classes and making out that one is better than the other. No one wins by determining which abilities count and making out that one is better than the other. No one wins by pitting the generations against each other and making out that one is better than the other. But we all win if and when we toss away the divides, rediscover our explorer spirits, create together and reshape our world.’ ‘You have a talent for words, Alice Adler, I give you that. I don’t think what you attempt is possible, but I am curious, and I won’t get in the way.’ Another mayor smiled. ‘I think I can say as much, Ms Adler.’ Another mayor nodded and said: ‘I watched a future simulation about empowering homeless people by giving them the means to build their own town. It was just a simulation, but it’s based on existing research. And just after two years, you wouldn’t have known that most people in this simulated town used to live on the streets. The people rediscovered their pride by building their own town without being patronised. You might be on to something, Ms Adler.’ Another mayor snorted dismissively. ‘Feeling good about yourselves, are you? So good that you won’t mention today’s major event which asks questions about immigration none of you has the wits, guts or wisdom to ask?’ ‘I didn’t hear about this,’ one mayor returned defensively. ‘Then let me tell you. Unlike anyone on the political spectrum, this town project suggests that we ask what makes a community, what frightens people so that they turn against others, what does someone who had to flee their country need, what is a nation for, how can we come together and create new stories, stories which are not about someone slaving for the other but stories about thinking, building and dancing

together? How can we make each other visible and learn to see each other? When will we finally stop telling people how they should feel and act, and instead find a way to shape our societies, our communities together.' Another mayor cleared his throat. 'I didn't hear that last bit. I guess, you added it.' 'I did! Because that's the gist of it. We keep attacking each other. We keep catering to a few idiots. We don't ask what makes someone afraid of the other. We don't ask where our media, our politics, our attitude makes all this inhumane divide in what we still call society, a hell on earth.' The mayor took a deep breath and added: 'I pray that this town project gets a chance. Though I have little hope. And since we are in this cosy group, I ask you, WHY have we become so stupid and insist on remaining stupid?' The silence that followed was only broken when Betsy and some of her team came with the desert. At four Alice, Adeola (business liaison), Devery (Hub), and the Mayor of Marble Town signed the papers for the new Hub Station. And they signed a second contract to revive some of Marble Town's former glass industry. This contract included a deal to trade glass with the prospective town, should it be built. Forty-five minutes later Alice, Adeola (business liaison), Hachiro (dot.) and the Mayor of Thistle Gate signed a contract for a new dot.station. Another forty-five minutes later, Alice, Adeola (business liaison), Claire (head of book stations international), Levi (head of the Arts & Crafts Team) and Kamal (member of the Arts Team) met with the Mayor of Elder Grove to sign a contract for a book station. After this, all mayors and many of the teams met in the hall of Jellybridge House to clink glasses, and the Mayor of Thistle Gate, aware that the politicians from London were standing in the background, said loudly: 'If London sees fit to either ignore us or to offend us with their pitiful levelling-up offers, then we are left with no choice but to work with the people

our government dismisses as freaks, people who have, at every turn, proven to be respectable, visionary, generous and sensible — unlike our government.’ Alice couldn’t help a smile, but she was worried. These contracts gave the town project a new edge and some recognition, but there were concern that these contracts might backfire since the project created dependencies with towns which were not part of the project. The mayors shared these concerns since they had agreed to be part of any town experiments that might relate to them. ‘Well, well,’ one of the mayors said. ‘So long as your motto is that an experiment is done to find out whether there is a better way to do something, I will put my eggs in your basket.’ Alice was a bit puzzled about the eggs and hoped they were cooked not raw. Later the Mayor of Thistle Gate told Alice: ‘I’m incredibly furious about the government in London. And, yes, I’m using the contract with you to make my anger felt. But I also meant what I said earlier. I was critical but you, your team, your companies and your generosity have impressed me, and I’m looking forward to working with your project.’ Just after sunset, Alice and Megan hosted a dinner for local and regional farmers. The mayors were welcomed to stay. The politicians from London, however, were not invited on behalf of the mayors and farmers who said that they would prefer to enjoy the evening. This night Alice got a little more sleep, ⁽¹⁸⁾ but she could have done with a better headline than the one Leo brought with the morning tea. **I WANT FUCKING DIRT ON HER!** the CEO of Golden Mergers yelled in a meeting. The manager who had leaked the outburst got fired minutes later. The town project wasn’t available for a comment on what dirt the CEO is referring to. In fact, the Media Team’s precise words were: ‘We’ve never heard of this guy. But it doesn’t sound like he’s referring to anything,

or he would demand of his team to find dirt, right?’ Ripples news, the town project’s paper, had a nice headline, too: BRIBES OVERKILL. In the past eighteen days, over three hundred members of our town project have been offered bribes, payable the moment they quit the project. The sum of these bribes amounts to several billion pounds. Since we at the project are quite busy, we decided to publish the names of these generous people, and add the details of their offers. We hope that this will discourage further attempts at bribery. As early as seven in the morning, Alice, Megan (agriculture), Ethan (town planning), Seth (business liaison) and Raiden (town simulation) met with the politicians from London, who had spend the night at Jellybridge. They used the library for their meeting where Betsy, the head cook, and her team had prepared a mouthwatering breakfast buffet. ‘I heard you use excellent food as bribe,’ one of the politicians joked. Megan (agriculture) raised her eyebrows. ‘And I thought we made it very clear this morning that we’re not into bribes.’ ‘Indeed, you did!’ another of the politicians returned with a chuckle. What followed was a surprisingly friendly and constructive meeting, and when the politicians left, there were handshakes and smiles. At nine all new business contracts were announced by the mayors of the regional towns. Shortly afterwards, Andy (in his role as Alice’s deputy) and Dennie (security) arrived at Jellybridge from London, and at ten Alice, Jazz (head of Project Security), Anthony (head of Building Site Security), Andy and Dennie met with the local police in the library to discuss potential cooperations. At the end of this friendly and constructive meeting, one of the officers asked: ‘Are you sure you don’t want any of us here with your protesters?’ Jazz shook her head. ‘They’re not

radical. But we'll keep you in the loop.' Meanwhile the mainstream media demanded an immediate press conference, and the British parliament called for Alice's, also immediate, presence to explain why on earth the town project would offer contracts to local mayors and to local businesses when there was no reason for the project to believe that they would get the permission to build their town. In response, Heather (media) opened a dedicated online Q & A for the press and informed them that the next press conference would be on Friday, in three days. At noon Alice, Adeola (Jellybridge business liaison) and Seth (overall business liaison) hosted a lunch for regional businesspeople, and more contracts were signed, including contracts for building machinery. The contracts always included clauses regarding labour safety, fair payment, 8h working days and similar. In other words, the companies agreed to play by the town project's rules. After another meeting with the Building Site Team, Alice, Andy, Raiden, Dennie and Jazz drove back to London. On the way, Alice called Rohana for an update. 'Who are you? Have we met?' Rohana asked when she appeared on the small screen at the back of the driver's seat, smiling broadly. Alice smiled back. 'Hi! Good to see you. How are you?' 'Oh, you mean, how are we leaderless pack? Not only derived of our boss boss but also of our second in command boss. Hi, Andy! How was your day out?' 'Good actually,' Andy replied. 'It did me good to see the site again. Good to see that this place is worth fighting for.' 'Wow? Fiery words from you! Fresh Jellybridge air does wonders.' Alice chuckled and said: 'So, Rohana, how have you been?' 'Well, where to start? I am fine. The team is great. The campaigns rocked. I mean while you lazed around in forests and lounged on green meadows, the campaigns completed their second week with fireworks of challenges, inspirations and fun.' Alice frowned. 'You look

as if something bothers you. What is it?’ Rohana sighed. ‘Don’t know where to start. Leo told you about that bleeding CEO who called for dirt on you, right?’ ‘Yes.’ ‘Well, later he offered money, a lot of it, for dirt on you.’ ‘Oh. Would I get money if I gave him a list?’ Rohana frowned. ‘Is there anything I should know about?’ ‘Rohana, of course there is dirt. I am human. I did some things in my youth, I am still appalled about. And maybe, it would be best if I just published a list. Yes, I hurt people. Yes, I thieved. Yes, I tried to convince people to believe in a god.’ ‘You were a thief?’ ‘Yes. It’s a rather typical story, I guess. Kid has no money but wants to have the things other kids have, too. Kid steals. And get’s a thrill because it gets really good at stealing. That I also stole things to give them away as presents probably doesn’t count in my favour.’ ‘Were you ever caught?’ Alice chuckled. ‘Yes. I was caught stealing the sweet cream I loved so much. I wept all the way home in the police car, and when the police handed me over to my parent, he said: “I think, she learned her lesson.”’ ‘Did you?’ ‘Yes, I never stole again. I tried once, just to see whether I could still do it. But yes, I was healed. Which tells us that it’s good for us to experience the consequences of our actions, or that our actions have consequences. I wonder whether we can use that.’ ‘What do you mean?’ Andy asked. ‘Not sure. But while our simulations show some consequences, and that gets some responses, it’s still not the same. It’s not like being caught, having to wait for the police and being driven home in a police car. Can we translate that? Can we give people, at least, the option to experience what the consequences of their actions are?’ ‘Like an immersive play?’ Dennie asked. Alice nodded. ‘Or maybe a kind of chamber of horrors where we experience what it is we do to ourselves, to each other and to our planet.’ Andy nodded. ‘That sound horrible. It might work. Rohana, what happened with the dirt stories?’

‘Oh. THE has been countering fake stories about Alice all day until they had enough dirt on Mr Golden Mergers to shut him up.’ || **days 17-13** || 15-19 March || Pushing || (day 17)

While all campaigns had their second day off, the Campaigns & Negotiations Team had a bit of a day. ‘Are you a foreign agent?’ a pushy podcaster asked on the phone, and Skye (care) burst out laughing: ‘Am I what?’ Skye laughed again before saying: ‘I doubt there’s a single secret agency with the balls to approach me.’ ‘What about Alice Adler?’ the podcaster returned unimpressed. Skye snorted. ‘She’s impossible to bent, she hates playing games and she’s hopeless when it comes to lying. You’d have to be really stupid to try to get her to do shady stuff.’ // Some desks away, John (business) was also on the phone, talking to Glen, co-head of ripples news. ‘I’m sorry to bother you with this, John,’ Glen said. ‘But people are bombarding us with accusations that the project makes millions with the campaigns. I need a solid statement, and I can’t get hold of Seth. He’s busy with the new business deals.’ ‘This is about the events themselves?’ ‘John, there’s people who claim that the town project isn’t interested in anything they say, only in getting as many people as possible on the streets and into their shops to make billions of their so-called good causes.’ John sighed. ‘I’ll write a statement.’ When John hung up, he grimaced. They had published all numbers a week ago: how much they earned, how much they spent, where the money came from, where it went, all of it down to the stamp for a postcard for a sick team member. By now, the numbers were updated daily. Did they make money from the campaigns? Not really. Did they cover their expenses? Yes. Were they generous with their expenses? For some events, yes. Well, mostly, yes. Isabel told them early on that the campaigns better be spectacles to get as much attention as possible. They weren’t penny pinchers. True. But no one complained

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about that. *We make millions, they write. That's not true and can be checked in the Hub's Transparency Room. What else can we say?* John's eyes fell on Navarro who sat on an armchair in the chill-out area, looking grim. *Navarro. He would suggest something like, like, like— YES! Change the narrative, shape the world.* John opened a new file on his laptop and began to write: We are not in the business of making money. We are in the business of empowering creators, traders, customers – and in the case of the campaigns, we are in the business of initiating explorations into the issues we as society need to address. Smiling John continued to write. // Meanwhile Emine (law) wasn't her usual smiling self and stood up to get a coffee from the bar. More lawsuits were coming in daily, and some of the older ones began to cause her serious headaches, too, because some bloody billionaires were pouring a lot of money into the pockets of ruthless lawyers. Not that those traitors to the profession had a chance against Emine and her team. But still. Things were getting pretty fucked up. The thing that got her most, she mused as she watched the espresso drip into her cup, was this new level of utter corruption of her own profession. There were moments when this, all of this, felt personal, only because she was a lawyer, too. She couldn't abide people who were meant to uphold the laws and instead used their knowledge and cunning to facilitate corruption, exploitation and— and who chose to be total scum. Emine sighed and added a sip of milk to her coffee. // At the same time, down in the atrium's Cliff Restaurant, Jack was losing some faith, too, in a meeting with one of the documentary teams. The film industry, feature and documentary alike, had always been boys clubs rife with sexism. But— But this was the town project. They had exposed the stupidity of sexism.

They had frequent sex talk meetings. They were dealing with this heads-on. Jack took a deep breath. 'Guys! I want you to listen very carefully! On this project we recognise that when it comes to anything concerning our sexuality, sex, gender and all the rest of it, we still have a long way to go. But listening to you right now, I get the impression that you haven't even take the first step. We, at this project, are done with exclusive male clubs. We are done with bloody boy club sexism and superiority complexes. Why? Because every bit of divide, every bit of exclusion, every bit of making out that some of us are better than others, more worthy than others, every bit of that keeps us from unearthing everything that is, it keeps us from coming together, from healing, from finding community!' One of the cameramen looked a little perplexed. 'Aren't you Jack Harris? Are you telling me, you suddenly shake everyone's hands, repost everyone's comment, celebrate everyone's attempt at making a movie, and play every role some third-class director wants you for?' Jack grimaced. 'I don't know, yet, how we'll be able to give everyone a stage and still be honest about who has talent and who doesn't. But I happen to know that everyone on our film teams is excellent. How do I know? Because, I chose you! The thing I didn't check is whether you're still struck in the sexist BS, whether you still believe that only the good old boys club is worth anything. My mistake. If want to stay on this team, I need you to reflect on these attitudes.' 'And align with the big bosses demands?' a sound assistant sneered. Jack chose an extra calm voice for his response. 'No. Alignment gets you kicked off the team, just as sexism does. Either you get to a point where you want to rethink your views for real or you don't. Anyone who thinks that making fun of their fellow creative's is cool has no place in our project.' // Meanwhile, some yards away, near the Oceans Bar, Hayley (tech) was talking with Jazz (Project Security)

and RedLeaf (Programming Team), also getting annoyed. 'I told Isabel,' she said, 'that we need to do better for wheelchair users. The Spring Specials are going to be huge. If we want them to be for all people, then we need to have toilets for wheelchair users.' Jazz nodded. 'That's why I brought RedLeaf.' 'I'm Tech Innovations not Programming,' Hayley retorted. RedLeaf cleared their throat. 'I've designed an app where people can choose an event or a chain of events, and then anonymously enter everything they might want on location like a coffee, a water fountain, a toilet for kids, a chair to rest, fruits, nuts, anything really. We want to launch the app tomorrow. That gives us four days of introducing, testing and adjusting the app so that everything should work fine for the big Spring Specials.' 'Are you saying, I can type in that I might like to access a wheelchair toilet around noon at Leicester Square, and it will be there? With nuts and ice cream afterwards?' 'Sort of. We hope that enough people register so that we can determine where what will be needed. Once we have that data, we can identify key spots that make access easy for the majority of registered users. And the users can find the spots on the day in question via the app.' 'I'm just that bit impressed.' // At the same time, Constance (crafts) stood on the square in front of the Compound and stared in disbelief as nine people emptied three lorries of parcels — all addressed to her. 'No one knew where to have them delivered,' Zack from Security said. 'What are these?' 'Thank you gifts from children and adults for the inspirations at the Crafts Day. They build things for you.' 'For me?' 'Every parcel is addressed to you.' 'What do I do with this?' 'Well, Chico, one of our people had a good idea, I think. She suggested that you ask the senders via the Hub's Campaign Square whether they'd be OK if you gifted these gifts as a Spring Special special to the people of London in the open-air market the team will set up on this

square.’ ‘Hm.’ ‘By the way, we are expecting more deliveries.’ ‘More than this?’ ‘Yep.’ ‘Should I open them?’ Constance asked. Zack smiled. ‘Chico suggests to make the unpacking part of the event.’ ‘But I’m expected in Edinburgh for the Spring Specials there. I won’t be here.’ ‘Oh ... Hm ... Maybe you could do a video with one of the documentary teams and unpack a few?’ ‘Nope,’ Constance returned, suddenly knowing exactly what she would do. ‘I’ll have a film team here to document the growing parcel mountain, which we’ll have to secure. The rest I’ll leave to a Challenge Garden Team. They can invent games of how to climb to a parcel, how to distribute the gifts, and whom to involve.’ ‘Sounds like a plan,’ Zack returned and bumped fists with Constance. // Meanwhile in the Central Building, Troy walked up the stairs, from the atrium to the seventh floor, talking on the phone. *No, we’re not talking,* Troy thought disgruntled. *I’m listening. I’m listening to the one person I’ve always wanted to work with. For years, I thought we must collaborate one day because of the similar ways we translate stories into illustrations.* Troy shook his head, still listening. Crikey! This call was a hard landing, a breakup before the first date, so severe that Troy wanted to kick every single flower box on the mesh grid along the staircases. How could this guy, this guy of all guys, this birds-of-a-feather guy, this you-are-my-pack guy turn out to be— to be so unpleasant, arrogant, self-righteous, condescending, blind, and unwilling to think outside of his bubble of convictions? Troy brushed one of the boxes with his fist and tried to interrupt the flow of unsolicited comments on why the town project was unscientific nonsense no respectable person would ever consider, and therefore it was a waste of time. ‘Eno. Listen. You think I’m wrong. I think you are risking your own legacy by attacking our project. Why? Because you’re always on about how we have

to take action. How we need to make things work for everyone and for nature. How we must expose corruptions and destructions. And now you dismiss a project which addresses all of that. What will the people who trust your judgement think about you when they realise that you had a chance to work with us, but you were too thick to do it?' 'You're naive,' Eno returned sharply. 'We're forced to compete. We can't afford to share our stage. That would weaken our branding, the reach of our voice, our standing. I have a reputation to maintain. Money rules everything. Money makes us do what we do!' Troy shook his head. 'Do you ever listen to yourself? The pencil is my sword, colours are my shield, words my attack. You said that! You wrote that!' Troy could hear a grimace at the other end of the line, and Eno returned. 'One. Give me one image.' Troy swallowed. One image to undo the breakup? 'OK. Housing. A high rise crammed with people, the house bulging, people visible at all windows, some holding on to window frames. Meanwhile four overlarge people, representing the government, employers, warmongers and speculators keep shovelling more people into the high rise. The caption reads: All humans are humans not assets to be stored away for a few hours of begrudged time off from productive work.' 'Not bad. The text is too long. Which you know. You are very good. I wish you good luck. Good day.' With that Eno hung up and Troy kicked a flower box. The daisies and soil flew into the air, some people on the fifth floor turned to see what was happening, and Bronx, from Rohana's team, came running. 'Are you okay?' 'NO! Housing!' 'What?' 'Housing. The term itself reveals a damaging narrative. Humans need homes and community, not boxes with a bed, a TV and a stove!' // By this time, Heather (media) had reached the ripples news office to help out for some hours because five people had caught a cold. Heather loved writing for ripples,

but she was a bit angry that despite all their provisions, they still didn't have enough people. But at least they had the budget to hire more. Suddenly a smile appeared on Heather's face. She was building an international network of blind artists, writers and craftspeople. It was a bit early in the process to involve them or to ask for favours, but maybe some of them would help out nonetheless. About an hour later, ripples news had signed on sixty additional writers and Hub interaction people from Heather young network. // Meanwhile Navarro (society) struggled with the disappointment that Sammy couldn't make it to London tonight. They wouldn't have had more than two or maybe three hours, but— But he missed her. 'Are you with the campaigns team?' a tall woman asked. Navarro looked up. 'Campaigns and Negotiations Team, yes. Why?' 'I'm with the Xtremis magazine. I just need a quote.' Here in the courtyard of the Front House? 'Oh, I don't mind if you buy me a glass of wine in the pub over there. But we've got to be quick. Deadlines. You know how it is.' 'I actually don't—' '—Good, good. You're right, the pub would take too long. So, I noticed that none of your campaigns throws around the big words like capitalism, Thatcherism, climate change. Why is that? Are you in favour of capitalism? Do you deny climate change?' For a few seconds, Navarro stared in disbelief. Of course, he knew that most journalists who attacked the project didn't bother with reading anything the project published. The quotes these kinds of journalists asked for were no more than ornaments in their fabrications, usually misquoted and taken out of context. With the hint of a grimace, Navarro returned: 'On our project, we have made it our goal to create visions which inspire people to step away from what is damaging them - and that includes everyone from the richest to the poorest, from the most influential to the newly born. Whatever anyone tells themselves, we all

lose if we don't reshape our world. So let's stop bitching. Let's start rethinking.' 'You are very small. Does that bother you?' 'No!' 'Are you some kind of token dwarf? That would be just like this project, right?' Navarro decided not to reply, turned and left. There were days when he would have told the journalist about Sammy, the star guest architect responsible for the future town's central library, about Riz, an incredible toymaker, Roger discovered, about Zuli, a new tech innovator who worked with the Building Site Team on the apps that would ensure smooth working at the site on all levels from food provisions to raw material delivers and everything in between, about Tris, a soil and waste management expert, and all the others. But not today. Not now. Now, he just wanted to get to the dot.workshop to pick up his new shirt for tonight and get back to work. Damn! He missed Sammy! // Around the same time, Andy (Alice's second) walked past the Oceans Bar in the atrium, entered the Security offices next to the staircase and knocked on Jazz's open office door. 'Oh, hi Andy. Come in. Close the door behind you, will you?' 'Erm ... sure. Is everything OK. Are you okay?' 'Me? Sure. I just need a word with you in private.' 'What about?' Jazz leaned back in her seat. 'It's not about my security training, right? I'm not going to stop the training. No matter what you say. I'll get good enough. I swear. I have to be able to protect those I love!' Jazz twitched the corner of her mouth. 'It's not that. I hear you're doing very well at the training, even now, on top of your present daily workload.' 'Then what is it? Jazz, I can see that something is wrong. Is it Alice? Is Alice safe?' Jazz exhaled noisily. 'You are all in danger. In particular Alice and you. The thing is that we received a flood of new threats.' 'But you will keep Alice safe.' 'Threats against you.' 'Oh. Me?' 'Yes. Because of the campaign simulations. The simulations are apparently so effective in showing just how much damage

crude oil causes and how extremely positive and beneficial everything on the planet would be without fossil fuels that these simulations pose a serious threat to a lot of big players. Also high on the list of attacks are the rape simulations because apparently these finally manage to de-normalise rape and make even some rapist come forward, confessing, and repenting.’ ‘I knew it! Alice knew it, too. People need to see. They need to see what the consequences of their actions are, in a simple, graphic way, in a way that allows everyone to see what happens if we have more or less rape, more or less empowerment, more or less pollution, more or less nature, more or less health, even more or less avocados. Jazz, these are fantastic news! Alice will be so happy.’ ‘I doubt she’ll be happy about the death threats against you.’ Andy shrugged. ‘It’s like you said. We’re all in danger, and we have been for a while. But no one will be able to shut down the simulations. And, Jazz, the simulations work! You know, I was moody when I came down here, but this is great! The simulations work! I need to talk with my team. We need to get out more. Can I go?’ Jazz nodded. ‘We have further tightened security around you.’ ‘I trust you. Bye, Jazz.’ // Some minutes later, Marita (economics) shook her head, after listening to Troy’s frustrations. ‘You won’t believe this, but I have a similar case,’ she said. ‘I just finished reading an article by someone I— I still respect, but who clearly overlooked a thing or two. You know: sloppy thinking, stopping half-way in his argument. But somehow I doubt that he would reflect on his occasional sloppiness, on the digging deeper he fails to attempt, splashing around on the surface. I mean, I believe in his potential. And I’m pretty sure, he isn’t using even half of it. But just before you came, I asked myself: Marita, why do I even care? He is just another guy who seems unaware of what he might be capable of if only— “—If only,” my wife

would echo, rolling her eyes, and she would tell me not to bother with this idiot.' Troy chuckled. 'I have a mind to send your guy a thank you note because I really need my guy not to be the only idiot.' Marita and Troy laughed, bumped their fists together, and looked up when, a few tables further away, Robin pressed loudspeaker on her phone and stood up to gain some distance from the shouting voice on the phone. 'WE WILL We will show the world that you and your town are abominations! Devil worshipers! You will all go to hell! Only when you are destroyed will our children be safe!' With this the caller hung up, and Marita, Troy, Emine and John went to Robin. 'Are you okay?' Troy asked, putting his hand on Robin's shoulder. After a moment of just looking at the phone, Robin turned and nodded. 'That was— That was something else.' 'Religious people?' Emine asked. Robin nodded. 'I did a bit of research on them. The caller belongs to a powerful religious group in the US, well organised, incredibly backwards, and apparently determined to destroy the planet their God created, and the wonderful diversity of people and wildlife their God made possible.' 'But why call you?' Marita asked. 'Education. Homeschooling. To get their blessing we would have to guarantee homeschooling in town, we'd need an evangelical church on the Central Square and we'd have to reject abortions. Emine, they will move heaven and earth to defame us.' Emine nodded. 'I'll put a team on it.' In that moment, Dana (ecology) cursed loudly and punched the bar counter. 'Ouch!' 'What happened?' several people in the open area asked, and Troy and Skye walked over to Dana. 'Bloody fools! The lot of them!' 'Let me see your hand,' Skye said. 'You're bleeding.' 'Whose a fool?' Troy asked. 'I mean, which fools got you spitting fire?' Dana grimaced. 'I'll get a bandage,' Skye said. 'Oh, Rohana, can you pass me the first-aid kit that's under the bar? Thanks. And I think, our patient here needs a glass

of water, too. Thanks.’ ‘Whose a fool?’ Troy repeated, sitting down on the bar stool next to Dana. ‘The lot them,’ Dana returned more quietly, accepting a glass of water from Sten, one of Rohana’s people. But after a sip of water, she bristled again. ‘It’s those bleeding paranoid fools who all declare that they want what’s best for people and planet, and they bitch and bite, and are so bleeding superior and condescending that they piss each other off, they piss me off, and totally miss the point that coming together means listening to each other, means thinking together, means testing ideas together, means caring how the other is, encouraging each other, coming to the bloody party. But instead, they’re only ever happy in their tiny worlds where the people around them tell them how brilliant, awesome, fantastic and oh, so good and right they are. I think we’re screwed! If those who care for people and planet can’t find a way to communicate, to work together, to question every narrative that keeps us divided, then we’re screwed. And these people won’t take a look at our project. Why? I don’t know. These are people who should be capable of using their brains, of thinking. But instead— I think I need to talk with Adriana, head of Neurology. Could it be that our brains are just that bit slow? Or that too many people are unaware that we can shape what our brains are capable of simply by using it to think, by leaving known territory? And then the paranoia. Foreign agents. What the actual fuck?’ Skye laughed and sealed the bandage on Dana’s hand. ‘I had one of those, too. I wonder whether paranoia is a logical consequence of that know-it-all feeling. Like, if a person thinks they figured it all out and someone else’s thoughts scratch into that belief, maybe then their only option is to believe they’re being conned because if they’re not, then they’re not the know-it-all they’re convinced they are. Does that make sense?’ Dana smiled a little, ‘It does,’ and let out a long sigh. ‘Maybe we can use

that, find way to make it easier for know-it-alls to embrace that there's still so much to discover.' 'Like mark the tracks with rose petals and paint all the doors with colourful mandalas?' Skye returned. 'YES!' Troy said. 'I can do a comic for this. Something like The salvation of the know-it-all.' The other two laughed. // Meanwhile Isabel, the head of campaigns, sat on a bench in the roof garden of the Central Building and spoke to a friendly journalist, enjoying some rays of sunshine which had just broken through the clouds. 'Yes,' she said. 'All our campaign events are accessible for free.' 'Which is not the same as being for free?' Isabel smiled a little. 'Not at all. We, at the town project and in our project businesses, believe that every service rendered should be compensated. However, we don't want to exclude anyone from the campaigns, and we believe the conversations we initiate in the campaigns are too important to let money keep people from participating. So we decided on what I call a bracket solution.' 'A bracket solution?' 'Yes. The first bracket is the point where we make it known what our costs for an event are. People are invited to contribute to those costs, and we add all contributions in realtime so that everyone knows where we stand. We close the bracket when our costs are covered.' 'What happens if an event is fully financed?' 'Then we give people the option to choose another event to finance or to support one of our projects, or to keep their money.' 'Then you make no profit with the campaigns?' 'That's a question of definition. There is no denying that the campaigns boost sales for our project companies, and that the Hub has gained several million new users. I think it's fair to count that as profiting and as making profit from the campaigns. But generally speaking, we are not about profit for profit's sake. We are not about helping shareholders to hoard more money or to get another thrill from speculating. Quite the contrary, we're always about

finding ways to let the success of one campaign or one project business ripple into success for communities, for other businesses, for the campaigns. There's something I love I learned at our project: everything in nature is constantly in motion, constantly moving in cycles. That's what we hope to achieve with all our activities, too: keep the money circling, nurturing all projects along the way.' // About an hour later, in an office also on the seventh floor, Raiden stood up from his desk and went to the window which overlooked the sport fields and the Hub International building. From early on this morning, Raiden had been going over the latest inputs from the Building Site Team for the town simulation. The list with Raiden's remarks was over twenty pages long by now. Damn! It was true that the plans were shaping up fine. But the team needed to complete the adjustments of the original town plans as soon as possible. Not just to be ready to start building but also to use the completed plans in the negotiations. Was there a chance to speed up the completion of the plans? NO! Raiden shook his head. No! Speeding up was the recipe for being sloppy, for overlooking critical issues, for forgoing ideas that only become visible at normal speed. Raiden sighed. No, speeding up was not an option. But he could go over his notes again and make sure that all his thoughts were as precise as possible and as thoroughly considered as he knew how. // Around the same time and at one of the workstations, Dennie grimaced. He was online on the Hub's Campaign Square, and he was annoyed. It happened. There were some discussions you had over and over again. He used to get a lot more annoyed about that, but then Navarro asked him: 'How do you know that the person who asks this time has ever read a single word you wrote? Maybe you are the first person for this person to discuss this issue with.' Dennie grimaced again. Navarro was, of course, right.

Which was OK because Navarro didn't like to be right. Anyway, Navarro was right, because there was no way that 8 billion people would have listened to what he, Dennie the security guy, had to say about security. And yes, it was bleeding presumptuous to assume that everyone is the kind of news and discourse junkie that even he wasn't. Yes, it was much more likely that the person who asked this question for the millions' time was in fact a person who was asking this question for the very first time in their life. *And kudos. You got an important question there. And yes, I shouldn't take my lack of patience out on you. So here it comes.* With a little sigh, Dennie began to type: Security is not a must-have in the sense of a law of nature. You only need security if you have a system that breeds injustice. Injustice, inequality, chains — that's the roots of everything that leads to situations where you need security. Dennie grimaced, as another commentator chipped in with the bleeding law and order argument. *Damn it! It's not that difficult to get.* Dennie cursed. Typing again, he wrote: Happy people do happy things. Unhappy people do unhappy things. A smile appeared on Dennie's face, and he called Troy whom he could see sitting at the bar with Dana. 'Dennie?' 'Troy, can we do a comic about Happy people do happy things. Unhappy people do unhappy things?' // At the same time and at the opposite bar, Rohana and Skye spoke, wondering whether to call for a sanity-check break. Too many team members seemed on edge. 'Maybe this afternoon,' Skye said. 'At least then, we'll have completed some work.' Rohana nodded. // In the morning other people got active for the town project, too, and at five to twelve, the second march for the town began in London, bigger than the first. Many demonstrators quoted the project on their posters and

banners. Some of the best lines were: True power is in creation — not in shareholder appeasement // We demand time to shape our future // Are you so afraid to face your mistakes that you can't suffer a town experiment which might expose your failures? // Customer power is power for our future. // My power is beautiful! // Your time is up, stock market gamblers. // You are more powerful than you know. // Thinking is like dancing in your mind. // You're nothing but a story. // Your truth is based on fairy tales. // Winners are losers! // A restored planet is the basis of unrivalled prosperity. // Us and them sucks! // If we don't stand up, the cowards of the world will continue to mess with us. // Am I better? Who the fuck cares? I am me! // Connection starts with the self! // This is my life, this is our community, this is our world — no one has a right to screw with us! // Cowardice can be overcome! // I stand with those who think not with those think they think! // Change starts in the mind! // Change starts in the mind // The one thing that's undervalued is THINKING FOR YOURSELF. The thing that's overvalued is believing that anyone has all the answers. // I want a long fulfilled life not bloody power plays, exploitation, genocides and corruption. // Once you start looking around, you realise that there's a lot of unused power just waiting to be unlocked, and none of it is violent. // Violence is the choice of those who don't use their mind, have a withered heart and a frightened soul. // Change the story. Shape the world. Kick out the nonsense that screws with us. // Does your story serve us? // We are the majority. // What are you afraid of? That someone proves how much you failed the people you are supposed to serve? // Better face the music now. The longer you wait the worse it will get. // Your strength is my strength. My power is your power. Your power strengthened me. // We, the people, are done waiting for someone to do right by us. We, the people, will shape a

world that works for us and the planet. // Alice smiled, reading Any's first update on the march, just before she got into the security car. It had been a strange morning. Maybe the day would get better. Or maybe not. About an hour later, Alice was back in parliament to answer questions about the project's new business deals. This time the meeting room was crammed with people. Five MPs sat at the semicircular table, and Alice was again asked to sit at the straight table. *The only place with a bit of space*, a passing thought remarked, and Alice smiled a little, despite the steely eyes of the MP who chaired the meeting. *Lady Macbeth*, a thought noted, to which another thought remarked, *you don't even remember the story of that play*. The first thought shrugged: *Scary lady, wasn't she?* The second thought grimaced, and the bespectacled lady in an elegant but slightly old-fashioned costume gave a nod to the MP next to her who caught the stick and barked: 'What do you think you are doing, Ms Adler?' Alice raised her eyebrows, and a thought remarked: *We really need to learn to see reality as reality. This here looks like a play, feels like a play, but it seems to be meant as reality.* 'What do you think you are doing, Ms Adler?' the MP repeated but less aggressively since the first outburst had been met with shallow waves of murmurs throughout the room, some of which seemed to echo support for Alice. *Why do you think in strange words?* a thought asked. Other thoughts shrugged and one remarked: *Must be this old-fashioned room. Must be this real unreal thing. No idea. Are we confused?* One thought put down their foot. *Damn it! We better un-confuse ourselves. We're needed. Real or not. This is about the town!* Another MP at the table offered Alice the hint of a smile and said: 'Ms Adler, it would help if you could tell us why you insist on acting as if building the town was an eventuality.' 'Oh,' Alice returned. 'That's easy. We want to be ready in case we get to build our

town. See, I would hate to lose more months only because we weren't ready to start building at the get go.' The chair frowned. 'Are you implying that you need business contracts with regional towns to start building?' 'Some of them, yes. But mostly those contracts are about building cooperations, about connecting. Our guess is, partially derived from what we observe in nature, that an isolated town will never be fully alive. Only what is connected to the neighbours, the region, the planet can unfold its full potential and thrive.' The MP on Alice's right cleared his throat. 'That contradicts your statement that no outsider business would be allowed in your town.' *Here we go again*, a thought remarked. Though, what followed were actually a few good questions about the nature of the town experiment and about what the town project wanted to explore. But after about seven minutes of this, voices against the project grew louder and, to Alice's pleasant surprise, voices for the project, too. Neither group seemed to require any response from Alice, and so she leaned back in her chair and watched the ping pongs. Among the town's supporters, Alice recognised three of the politicians who had been to Jellybridge. And several MPs from Cornwall, Wales and Scotland impressed Alice with their comments, even before a Scottish politician initiated a hypothetical discussion about what kind of conditions, for building the town, the government could perhaps agree to. Those discussions resulted in more protests as well as additional suggestions. Meanwhile, though intrigued, Alice began to wonder why exactly she had been asked to be here. It was the MP from the Na h-Eileanan an Iar constituency who had Alice concede that some points might need clarifications. 'We are all island people here,' the MP said. 'Some of us more than others. Those of us who grew up facing the storms of the sea, know that the sea occasionally brings treasures to our shores. Some treasures

we don't understand, others challenge us, some might look alien and yet have something to offer. I fear that our unexpected guest is right. There is no use in building a town experiment that is a replica of what we already have. I also agree that if someone wanted to go about such an experiment, they would need a tabula rasa, start from scratch with the freedom to adjust and test as they go. At the same time, we as MPs have a responsibility not to allow something onto our islands which eventually wreaks havoc, like sweet bunnies which become a pest. So how could we get the benefits without the pest? I think we might be able to open a window by being very precise. For example, the town project claims that their security team has the capacities to protect the citizens of the town. OK. I say. And thank you for not spending taxpayer money. But let's be a bit more precise. The project team mentioned that in case of a criminal offence, the suspect and the case would be referred to the local police. We know that's not just words. We have a report that Alice Adler and her head of Security met with the local police at the Jellybridge Estate, yesterday. According to the officers, it was a constructive and well prepared meeting. That sound thorough and responsible to me. So we have a window here because we could take the time to consider all possible scenarios which might occur in connection with the project, and then determine how to act in which situation. If we did that, we might be able to make this intriguing town project possible without compromising or neglecting our duties. It makes no sense that we control the experiment. As we have been reminded, our records are not particularly good. But I also have a mind to say to the town project people: So you think you can do better? Oh, well, prove it then.' 'Hear, hear,' several MPs called. 'But imagine the gains if the town project really manages to come up with the kind of solutions we haven't dared to hope for. What is it to

us that these people believe humanity can do better? Do we really need to stand in their way because they could find out that, yes, we've been a wee bit too stupid, shortsighted, nepotists, and some cases imperialists? What if the project find out that we could do better and would all benefit from it? What I'm saying is, we could try to find a way that would allow us to give the town project the freedom it needs to explore. We might make it possible by drawing a line. The line being a catalogue of things that will be a no go, such as human sacrifice or child labour. Though I hear that child labour is something the project wants to explore. So we'll have to be more precise. What kind of child labour might be beneficial to explore? And where would we draw the line? The same goes for businesses. The project's arguments are very clear on why not just anybody can do business in town. Anyone who has ever done an experiment knows that you need to be able to make adjustments. You can only do this if you determine who takes part in the experiment and under which conditions. Again it's a question of drawing the line somewhere. For example by stating that a company which operates on the same principles as the town project or a company which is prepared to become part of the experiments cannot be refused. And the fact that the project signed contracts for regional cooperations with companies near their future town tells me that they are even madder than I thought, or a lot more courageous than I gave them credit for. From what I see, they are not proposing to become an exclusive cult. They are already opening their town to outside business. But again to make sure we sleep well, we need to draw the line somewhere, and we need to be very precise about it. And then there is the question: How will we make sure that the line we agreed on will be honoured? That's an easy one. The project has already signalled that they would agree to occasional visits from

governmental observers, so long as everyone knows who they are, and so long as we only get access to anonymised data. I tell you, I have never seen an organisation or a business so eager to be transparent as this town project and its businesses. Therefore I could sleep well, if three or four of our people visited the town once a month and reported back to us. I would also recommend that Alice Adler herself, gives us a monthly report, one that is collaborated by the observers. Asking for taxes would interfere with the experiment's set up and its attempt to test new tax systems. And quite frankly, it would be outrageous to thank the project people for building a perfect town by squeezing money out of them. So long as they don't incur costs for us, we should let them be. One point I won't back down on is that there needs to be a plan for transitioning the town from a town experiment to a regular British town. That's not just important for us. It's also important for all those courageous people who want to move into the town and be the project's guinea pigs. I would vote to compile a full list of critical points and then decide where we can allow for freedom for the sake of science and humanity, and where we have to draw the line.' A fierce discussion erupted and Alice used the moment for a typed conversation with Any, who confirmed that someone was transcribing these suggestions, and that he would help the Campaigns & Negotiations Team with a complete list of critical points and suggestions on where to draw the lines. It was some thirty minutes later that Alice was asked for a statement, and she addressed the MP from the Na h-Eileanan an Iar constituency directly. 'I love the Outer Hebrides, in particular Lewis, and I thank you for your suggestions. You have given us something to think about. But I'd appreciate not to be compared to a sweet bunny again.' The MP and several others laughed, and, smiling a little, Alice continued: 'I tend to be an impatient person, and

maybe I'm a bit too convinced that I simply don't do anything harmful. I would like nothing better than a handshake agreement that the town will be granted full autonomy and in return we'll share our findings with the planet. But it's probably much wiser to play through possible worst case scenarios and to agree on how we would deal with each other in such cases. Since we have an advanced town simulation, and we already have played through a number of worst case scenarios, we can share all the data we have with you, and if you like, we can also give you a copy of the original simulation so that you can run your own tests. Why not the present simulation? Because that's still work in progress as we adjust our original plans to the proposed site for our town. And here is a personal offer from me to you. It's OK if you don't trust me. You don't know me. But I am ready to be tested. I am ready to answer all your question. You can challenge me on anything: our business models, our views on foods, biodiversity, crime, farming, innovations, disability, education. You name it. Me and my team don't have all the answers. But we have a pretty long list of relevant questions, and a likewise long list of ideas we could test in the setting of the town.' Later Alice shook hands with the MP from the Outer Hebrides. 'Agreed,' he said. 'No more bunnies.' Alice chuckled, and she was still smiling when she got into the security car. But she frowned just a little when Jazz told her their next destination. 'Oh! Now it gets interesting — or fishy. I'm ready. Bring it on.' Alice remarked. Jazz smiled a little in return and drove Alice to a club where she was to meet with an Earl, for the first of several secret meetings which had come in as requests since this morning and would keep Alice busy for the rest of the night.