



CHARLIE ALICE RAYA

The end of all wars

# The big **clean-up**

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**The end of all wars**, planet eight, The big clean-up  
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### Cover & layout

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# The big **clean-up**

Planet eight

## AUTHOR's NOTE

**The idea for this story** happened to me unexpectedly while on a train to my favourite lake.

It was an idea which latched on to me out of the blue (like they sometimes do), and I got sucked in, hardly able to give it a break when I reached my destination.

Transcribing the notes today was great, an easy to do thing on a day that was too hot for more demanding work.

This version is a first draft and it should be interesting to extend it to a full story.

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# The big clean-up

**You might be surprised** to hear that we ended all wars accidentally.

It all began with a crazy woman.

A woman on our planet is anyone who has a particular liking for showing themselves in striking attires, hairdo and make-up. Women stick out – everywhere. But this woman stuck out more than most. Her most striking outfits were made of thousands of feathers which earned her the nickname: cockatoo.

We liked and sometimes feared her because of her candour, her wit and her crazy ideas – and her impatience with our slowness in getting things done.

One day, dressed in a robe made of fiercely red fire bird feathers, the crazy woman flared up, calling us- No! No, I will not repeat it. Suffice to say that we were shamed because we knew that we deserved her rebuke.

We sank into a depression. What could we do? Our planet, though without wars for a century, was in a mess and deteriorating at a frustrating pace. Poverty, crime, exploitation were skyrocketing. There was never enough food, housing, electricity or transport, and our fields and waters failed us, yielding ever less.

A week into our shame, the crazy woman appeared in a yellow workperson's suit. Her head was crowned with yellow feathers, and she made the craziest proposal yet: 'Let's clean up our planet! Together! One region at a time!'

Before I continue with the story, a word about the geography of our planet. We have three distinct landmasses which are separated by our three oceans. All our landmasses meet at both poles.

At the time, all lands within a continent were connected via bridges, many too rotten to use. The continents could be reached by fleets of boats, many in need of repair. We had abandoned flying some years prior to these events, fearing for our lives if we burned more fossil fuels. So much for geography and a few hints on the state of our planet.

So, here we were: depressed, paralysed by the mess generations before us and we ourselves had inflicted upon our planet, shamed and now staring at the crazy woman on our phones. We didn't have tellies or computers any more. We had run out of resources and no one had gotten around to recovering materials from all the waste that covered two thirds of our planet by now.

And again: Here we were, staring at the yellow figure of the crazy woman on our phones who had just made the most preposterous proposal – which to our surprise sounded absolutely sensible.



We in our separate countries had been numbed by the enormity of the task to transform our communities and our businesses into places which no longer cause damage. And instead of doing anything, we were used to seeking solace in denial and more destructions.

But if we could unite- No, that was too big a word. If we could all assemble in the same region, one single region of our planet, and transform, restore, and reshape it together – and when the work was done, move on to the next region – then it might be possible to turn the fate of our planet, and with that our own fate. These were the thoughts that slowly surfaced in our minds.

Of course, the crazy woman had crazier ideas in her action plan such as making everyone into a citizen of the planet, or to choose one language we could use to communicate with each other.

The crazy woman also announced detailed plans for how to provide for those who could not work. It's not what you think. Or maybe by now, you, too, expect a crazy idea for our non-workers. Well, more about them later.

It says a lot about our dire situation that we started to talk about the crazy woman's ideas immediately, all of us glued to our phone screens. And it was only some three days later that we realised that we were climbing out of our depression, and tiny sparkles of hope appeared in our eyes.

It was a crazy idea to clean up the planet together. But it was finally an idea we could embrace. Besides, who doesn't like to attempt the impossible when it's crazy enough?

We set up committees, our governments began negotiations, our scientists finally were full of inspirations again, we issued planetwide citizenships, and we chose one language as bridge between our nations and renamed it Planetian – our imagination was still very sleepy.

In only two months we were ready to get started. This might seem a bit fast to you, but allow me to assure you: we had no time to waste.

One citizenship, one language, one currency, one big migration to the south of continent one. And then we began: we, the people of our planet, cleaned the streets, houses, parks, waters, fields. We removed poisons, plastic, tarmac, waste. We demolished a lot of buildings to create more space for nature. We reorganised each region's business compositions and business cycles. We repaired the infrastructure in a way that only a minimum of energy was required. We laid the foundations for community life, built new houses with the aim of providing healthy homes. And so much more.

We were like a huge swarm of locusts or bees or birds (whichever swarm or flock animal you like), landing in an area and when we left, our hearts lifted, because we saw what is possible if we simply do the job, listen to our scientists, do some experiments to be sure we are on the right track, adjust our ideas whenever a better option

presents itself and create for humans and nature alike – not for profits, nor to cover up damage.

Many of us were worried about the not-for-profit approach because at the time we still believed in the fairy tale that profits are good for something. By now, I can testify that a restored planet is the basis for unrivalled prosperity, empowered fellow humans make our economies thrive and our souls are healing because we finally reconnected to the source of our existence: yes, nature, and to each other. Writing about this gets me so excited, I jumping ahead of the story.

So, where were we?

Ah, yes: After our first successes in cleaning up our habitat, we experienced a hope and joy some of us had never experienced before.

We worked our way to the north of the first continent, leaving the restored places to nature so that the natural world could recover without our interference.

By the time we came to the north of our third continent, the final region, we were a new people, and some joked that we should rename our planet, because it was transformed beyond recognition.

It is time to mention the universe alliance. We had been part of the alliance of inhabited planets for some decades, but we had been too busy with creating ever more consumable goods and with that ever more waste, exploitation and destruction that we, the people, rarely took notice of the alliance. But when we considered the crazy woman's idea, those politicians and scientists who had been active in the alliance contacted it and asked for advice on how we could clean up our planet, on a practical level, like how do you deal with a planet's population who are suddenly all in one region?

The best idea came from a planet close to ours. 'Build mobile cities, cities you can adjust to different terrains, and prepare your people to live simple for years to come.'

And that's what we did. We formed groups, built mobile tent towers, packed basic clothes and basic everyday items, made sure to have a medical tent, a sanitary tent and a tools tent, and once we got our assignments, we moved our simple towns near the spots where we would work.

To this day, we still have six mobile towns which we use whenever a region on our planet needs some major work to be done.

On the outskirts of our working areas, we created spots for our non-working people: children, the less mobile, the sick and the very old. All of whom did everything they could to make their mobile towns work with little of our input. Often they contributed to our work by doing lighter works whenever they could: such as repairing clothes, cooking, learning with

the children or reading to them, or the children reading to the sick.

This way, we didn't have to leave anyone behind.

It was not exactly an easy time for our children. But if you ask them today, most of them will tell you that they understood why they saw so little of their families. Many children were eager to learn required skills so that they could join the major works as soon as they had passed their basic exams at sixteen. This meant that a generation of people started their university courses up to twelve years later than previously common, but to quote my sibling's child: 'I got a chance to do the impossible. Afterwards I got a chance to learn more. I have no regrets.'

There was, of course, the question of money, and another planet counselled that no one should earn money. 'You have more important things to do,' they said. 'If you want a future, you'll have to focus on restoring, restructuring and rethinking your planet. Making money will only get in the way and cause conflicts between all the brave people who leave everything behind to restore the planet together.'

We don't know for sure whether that is true, but we can testify that taking the accumulation of money out of the equation is liberating, brought us together and made us focus on our task in ways none of us had known.

Food was, of course, an issue. But once you get over the fact that your favourite brands are no longer available and had been too full of sugar, fat and ominous sounding ingredients anyway, things got a lot simpler.

And not just that, many of us were surprised that the lack of these foods made us healthier, stronger and more energetic. Though, in the first years, our diet wasn't half as varied as recommended by doctors. That kind of variety was something we could only establish after the recovery of our planet and with trade routes which are sustainable.

In order to make sure that everyone got a chance to contribute to our main task: the clean-up and the restoration of our planet, we rotated between working at main sites, on fields, in bakeries, on hunting trips or in kitchens, to name just a few.

All factory farms were closed at the beginning of our clean-up, since large scale animal farming had been the sources of pandemics and were one of the main contributors to the contamination of our waters, to say nothing about deforestation.

We only slowly re-established small farms when we began the second tour of our planet, a tour designed to reintroduce ourselves to the planet and to decide where each of us would settle, now that our main work was done.

Over a decade had passed since we had last been in the first region in the south and what those of us saw when we returned filled our minds and hearts with pride and joy: Nature had exploded with a biodiversity none of us had ever seen. We were in awe and after some weeks of exploration, we began to gently integrate into the space, started to work in the workshops, shops, restaurants, gardens, theatres, in the small factories and the artist studios which had been

waiting for us. It was then that we began to reintroduce some small scale farming and diverse plant farming.

The question of who would live where, became a huge because having worked in every region of the planet, many of us no longer felt a bond to a specific spot or nation of the planet. The planet as a whole had become dear to our hearts. In the end, we agreed that anyone should live in a place they liked best. And luckily we are all different enough to have different preferences. Besides, our restored planet has an abundance of marvellous places. Often groups of people who met during the clean-up joined together to make their new homes.

It was not easy to come to this agreement and don't get me started on the tiresome question of property. And indeed, it was the question of who should own what and how, which brought the option of waging war on our radars. After all, war had served as a way of distributing land before.

I can tell you that the universe alliance became very tense when some of us discussed whether war was a suitable way to solve the question of property.

But soon we all smiled. It was too late for us. Accidentally we had removed all major seeds of war. No way would we raise arms against the people we had worked with for over a decade to restore our planet. And quite frankly that makes us very proud.

And eventually we found a solution for property, we can all live with.

A lot more has changed in our lives, on our planet, but I will only mention a few more things.

The news cycle is much reduced. We know our planet, our planet's people and mostly we gather once a week to hear or read what has been happening elsewhere. This gives us a lot more time for our lives, it reduces stress, and it gives us something to come together for on a weekly basis. Mind you, we also meet for harvests and to tend to our gardens, to hunt, to dance and sing, to study and to develop new ideas.

Many of us have come to like each other's company. Others still enjoy times of solitude, and our extensive wild stretches of nature offer many tracks and hideaways for those of a more solitary disposition. Tracks are usually raised above the ground, sometimes as high as the canopy, to leave the ground to nature and to make sure that the natural movements of seeds and wildlife are not disrupted too much.

One of the new features we have established are the VR domes. Imagine you live in a place that is surrounded by stunningly biodiverse nature, you breathe clean air, you plant on decontaminated soil, you drink rich water, you travel on bicycles, you do what your talents are best suited for, you enjoy the company of your fellow humans. In short, everything is perfect.



But sometimes you miss the stink of the old cities' crowds, or the race in your favourite car along the coastal highway, or the crammed underground trains of the old days, the slaughterhouses, the gigafactories, drug heists, mega prisons, scorching temperatures in cities and a lot more – that's where the VR domes come in. You can use them for a ride in your favourite car along your favourite route, or you return to the old sounds, feels and smells of your native city. And strangely, many of us love the taste of the old – but after some hours of now otherworldly fun, I haven't heard of anyone, yet, who wasn't glad to step back into our present world.

Of course, at the very beginning, there were people who said, it's impossible to clean up the whole planet. What would we do with the monstrous gigafactories, the inhumane high-rises, the mounds of waste?

You always have someone who insists that IT can't be done, and someone is bound to shout: IMPOSSIBLE.

To be honest, most of us were those people – and the crazy woman laughed. She really- I mean for all the good she inspired us to do, she really was crazy, and she laughed with a mirth that hurt us all the way down to the deepest caves of our souls.

And then she stopped, her eyes wet with tears of laughter, and she spoke to us as if we were ridiculous children she loved but couldn't help laughing about. And she said: 'Oh, my dears. We've all been there. A playroom cluttered beyond recognition, a kitchen filthy with dishes and the leftovers of weeks.

And we thought the only solution was to move out, not a few of you dreamed of moving to another planet because you believe that the next time you will not let everything go down the drains.’ She laughed again mercilessly. ‘Dears! This is our planet. We have everything we need to bring it back to life: our brains, our hands, our eyes and our feet. We have each other. It’s time we turn can’t into can, time to stop bickering, time to stop dooms-daying, and time to start doing. It won’t be fun to sort through the sticky toys, to find the rotting apple or the chewing gum in the fur of your favourite teddy bear. And the carpet? Yuk! It has to go. People! Doing what needs to be done will be disgusting, exhausting, frustrating and at times, it will feel like too much. Lucky for us, we don’t have a choice. Either we do a great clean-up, get all the toxins and everything that makes us and our planet sick out, and rethink life on our planet, or we suffer the last days of a suicidal existence on a planet which is about to collapse. But why would we do that? Because we can’t face the mess we inflicted upon ourselves?’ Suddenly, the crazy woman’s face and voice became so gentle, I think most of us fell in love with her, and she said: ‘Take heart. You will be the greatest of all generations because you came together to attempt what no one has ever done before. You will reap fruits unheard of and so delicious, you will wonder whether you have come to another planet.’

How she could have know that many of us would feel like that, I cannot say. Maybe she was just creating a vision for us to hold on to – especially in the first months which were the worst because we were still filled with doubts, and suspicious of each other, many of us still learning the language that was to become ours.

But our first successes broke the ice, the walls of doubts. We all had that moment at some point. For me it was the demolition of a sprawling, soulless housing estate, home to ten-thousands of people who had been treated like assets not like humans. Once we had cleared away the rubble, we rewilded the area and later lay the foundations for new humane communities which today exist in tune with nature and provide the people with places that deserve the term home. These communities are composed of welcoming apartment houses, workshops, shops, cafés, all connected, all profiting from what each member of the community has to offer. Often several communities are neighbours, each community providing different foods, goods, talents and services.

What happened to the crazy lady?  
She was amazing. Like a true leader, she was always the first to go into the battle, each time when we relocated to a new area. We, on the other hand, especially in the first two or three years, often felt paralysed again when we reached a new place and saw the extent of damage we had caused. The crazy lady would, in one of her yellow suits, be the first to walk into the poisoned stink, and then she would work tirelessly, often changing between teams, somehow guessing that we needed her craziness to stay sane and to keep going.

After the big clean-up, the crazy lady travelled far and wide in search of rare feathers, feathers found on the ground. She never killed and refused to buy feathers unless she had reason to trust that the bird had not been killed.

People say, she was a lone and restless wanderer, a cockatoo always in search of a new robe. But every now and again, she would allow herself to bathe in the crowds, dance with them and laugh with her admirers.

There is a rumour that she fell in love unexpectedly, but no one knows whether that love ever came to be. Though, I recently heard the story that the loved one eventually found the courage to speak to her and that the bliss, strength and wisdom they find joining their minds, bodies and souls allows them to reach depths and heights unheard of, and that their love for each other is inseparable from their love for the planet and the people.

Sometimes, she still laughs at us.

There is another rumour that she trains groups of future cockatoos who can follow in her footsteps once she is gone so that we always have someone who looks out for us and laughs with the kind of mirth that hits us deeply when we stray again and that helps us to get up and do what needs to be done.

Though, at least for the generations who have been part of the great clean-up, I can say that we have learned to laugh about ourselves, and that laughter is a wonderful antidote to folly.

And, yes, we still get things wrong. But we have come to appreciate that we don't have to stay stuck in our mistakes. Instead we can use our mistakes as inspiration to test new routes and ideas.

## AUTHOR'S NOTE

I'd love to extend this story into a full story and in particular add bits about what kind of clean-ups are needed and how those could be done to initiate the recovery of a planet.

Input from ecologists, engineers, environmentalists, scientists, architects as well as writers and co-writers are welcome.

I have some additional notes and ideas, I can contribute. If you're interested, please, contact: [contact@the-end-of-all-wars.net](mailto:contact@the-end-of-all-wars.net)

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