

Disconnected

It all started with the climate change giant puppets march that happened monthly in our town. The march was just an excuse to justify their deeds. After all, as some citizens used to say, there wasn't much difference between the Taliban Militia with their Sharia Law and our Climate Militia and their new by-laws.

Even the way they dressed reminded us of the Taliban, with their white turbans, long, loose shirts and their dark, inquisitive looks. Nonetheless, it was time to start paying for the ignorance and selfishness that ruled our old life.

Climate Militia would pop into our house unexpectedly, check the weekly electricity consumption, the garbage, as well as the number of used containers and another packaging. If they found plastic around, you've got yourself an extra day of serving at the planting station, on top of your weekly target.

They took away our vehicles and recycled them. And as their socialist model was thoroughly in place in no time, they provided everybody with a donkey or a pony in a matter of days. Riding lessons were provided free of charge in schools and institutions every Monday and Wednesday at lunchtime.

But we preferred the pony-share system. One could find a pony or a donkey any time of the day on the street corner, in the designated places. At the end of your ride, all you needed to do was to take the pony to the Auto-Feed Station, get him a bag of organic non-flatulent hay, then drop him back at the station. No strings attached.

The most privileged citizens would ride their own donkey-drawn carriages. However, access to a carriage was carefully regulated and monitored by the Militia. First of all, you'd have to plant over 1000 trees just to get on the carriage-waiting list. For an outsider, our town

probably looked like an East European old gypsy village, not like one of the most progressive towns in the state of California.

Things got really messed up. In January, the thermometers showed 100 degrees. Last snow fell in July, and that turned out to be the best skiing of the year. El Nina brought us lots and lots of powder. And although we were supposed to grieve the climate change, that didn't prevent us from enjoying that amazing POW. To be honest, for us, the ski lovers, those were some of the most exhilarating days of our lives.

Consequently, people didn't know how to schedule their holidays. Tourism agencies started to lose their clients, and by the end of this year, more than half of the tourism businesses ended their holiday affairs for good.

And then in August came that notorious deadly tornado. It ripped apart a quarter of the town's houses, took seven human lives to heaven as well as thirteen little ponies and donkeys who were yet too small to save themselves. And it wasn't Dorothy and Toto flying up in the sky this time, but our real farm animals - wailing and screaming in despair-, the roofs of our houses, fences, pieces of furniture, chandeliers, lamps, our beloved pets, books and other precious belongings. It was an apocalyptic scene to witness, that has been haunting us ever since.

That was probably the moment when we truly became humble and grateful for being alive, and truly aware of our future. This is when we genuinely began to nurture our planet. And ourselves.

We were allowed to use electricity 3 days a week. The rest of the evenings we'd spend by candlelight, and this is how we finally got to know each other. Eventually, the Climate Militia took away our cell phones too. They didn't give us a solid reason for that, since this time they couldn't invoke the energy consumption as the main culprit. But deep inside, I

think we all knew that was for the best. That was the turning point when people started to talk to each other and got interested in each others' lives. Whether that was authentic or it was brought by the electric and electronic isolation, that's hard to say. But even if it wasn't so to start with, it did become real eventually.

Lots of beautiful friendships and even romantic affairs started with cozy neighbourhood gatherings and storytelling by candlelight. And ironically, the three-day electricity policy turned out to be one successful way to finally improve the poor birthrate in our county.

And then we had the community mediation to keep us together in one of those electricity-free evenings. The event would usually unfold with a collective eco-mantra-chanting. We would form an impressive cross-legged circle, hold our hands and start chanting for the first 15 minutes. It was quite a memorable scene to see a wide circle of 1000 people sitting cross-legged on Main Street, in the dark, surrounded just by a few flickering candles, and chanting from the top of their lungs. The entire town would become quiet during that time. Even the Militia would join us. They'd put their turbans aside, hold our hands and became one with us. One couldn't even hear the tick-tock of a clock or the cries of a baby during meditation time. The Climate Militia used to say that we gained the wisdom and the magic of stopping time. And what a precious gift that was!

Our town became that village that raised children together. It was wonderful to see the sense of community working its magic in everybody's lives. Back then, we used to meet our closest neighbours mostly online. We'd wave at each other with some big honking smiles from behind the wheel if we happened to see each other around, and that was it. Next, everybody was off to their unfortunate existence, connected to electricity and disconnected from everything else. But luckily we did learn another way, which turned out to be a true blessing for us all. These days, we carry on wonderful conversations by the candlelight,

meaningful dialogues that nourish our souls and nurture our spirits. And we've been finally learning what friendship and true intimacy are. In the morning, we hop on a pony or a donkey and set off to the odd jobs that would allow us to put some food on the table for dinner. But honestly, we're all secretly looking forward to our next candlelight gathering.

On our way to work, we often run into Militia. They would be strolling the town, looking for any signs of urban unrighteousness; If we happen to cross paths, they'd give our ponies or donkeys a pat on the back and offer them a morning treat. And often, from under with their opulent and intimidating turbans, they'd nod gently and smile at us. Then we'd know we're doing the right things.

The End