

Puzzle Korner

					3	2	6	
3				4		1		
				1		7		8
	5	6	4				8	2
			6		5			
7	1				2	6	5	
4		5		3				
		1		2				3
	2	3	7					

4					5	8		
7			6				5	
	3						2	6
8				6			1	
2	7						6	8
	1			8				3
3	4						8	
	9				1			5
		2	4					1

1	3	5	7		
2				9	10
4					
6					
			8		

Across

- 1 One over the other
2 Appearance
4 Greek poet from isle of Lesbos
6 Resurrection day
8 Amazement

Down

- 1 English translation of Al-Qaeda
3 Israeli name to mean "he will laugh"
5 Download on phone
7 Public transportation
9 Bite, gnaw
10 Past tense of tear

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The Independent

PHILADELPHIA'S COLLEGE STUDENT NEWS

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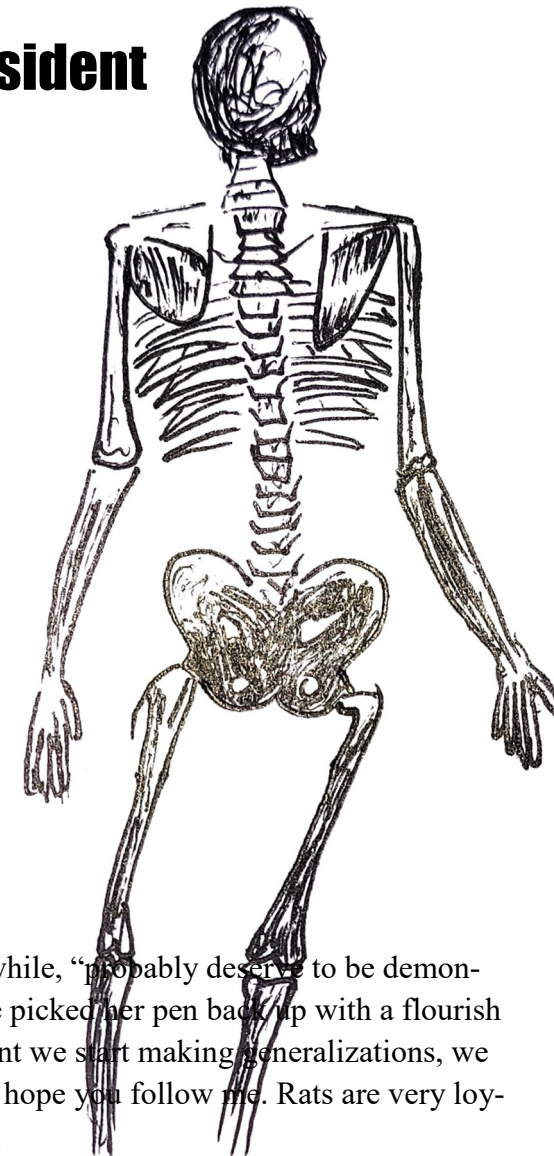
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"Some rats," she said after a while, "probably deserve to be demonized. Certain individual rats." She picked her pen back up with a flourish of the purple feather. "The moment we start making generalizations, we give up our right to self-govern. I hope you follow me. Rats are very loyal to the planet..."

—Ottessa Moshfegh, excerpt from *My Year of Rest and Relaxation*

Who Does This College Serve?

The Strike That Nearly Was

On March 26, just hours before faculty and staff were set to walk off the job at 7:00 a.m., the Community College of Philadelphia administration caved.

After months of organizing, the Faculty and Staff Federation of CCP (FSFCCP) announced it had reached a tentative agreement with the administration. According to the union's statement, the agreement included higher wages, increased staffing, smaller class sizes, and an invitation to the table with SEPTA for free transpasses for students. The union called the win a sign that "when faculty, staff and students stand in solidarity with each other, we can all win more."

"These contracts set a new standard for workers and students across the city, state, and country," the union wrote. "Through the collective power of CCP workers, the support of CCP students, family, friends, and local and state politicians, union allies and community organizations, we secured tentative agreements with significant gains compared to other institutions of higher learning."

It was the most student-centered contract the college had ever seen. And within days, President Dr. Donald General was gone.

The Board of Trustees, CCP's unelected body of fifteen mayoral-appointed business leaders, voted 13-0 to not renew General's contract months ahead of schedule with no public explanation. He was placed on administrative leave immediately. There was no open discussion, no hearing, no student voice just a sterile statement insisting the move had been made "with a high degree of transparency and consideration."

The timing is not subtle. The message from the Board is anyone in power who tolerates solidarity will pay its price. The union won. The president vanished. Whoever bends to the will of labor may not be welcome at the top.

CCP's Oligarchic Governance

CCP students don't vote for the college president. They don't elect the Board of Trustees. But those two forces control almost everything from

tuition hikes to class sizes to who gets fired for doing their job too well.

The Board of Trustees is a 15-member body appointed entirely by the mayor. They answer to no students, no workers, and no campus vote. Yet this group wields the power to hire and fire the college president, control multimillion-dollar budgets, and shape the direction of a public institution that claims to serve the working class of Philadelphia.

The Board's recent actions show what it really values. In the wake of the tentative union agreement that dared to treat students and workers like people instead of costs, the Board ousted President General, who signed off on the deal.

Earlier this year, Jason Hand, our affable former Director of Enrollment, left on quiet terms. At every Trustees meeting, the enrollment numbers are presented and ogled at the consistent growth in enrollment. Pivoting away from hard-sell tactics that pressure vulnerable students to enroll at any cost may have been too much integrity for the Board's taste. Hand has not responded to comment.

Then, Richard Kopp, Assistant Dean of Students, was let go in January after privately advocating for a student-led Financial Advisory Board to oversee the college's \$1.6 million General College Fee. That plan would have given students some say over how their own money was spent. Kopp is now at Camden County College.

Anyone who proposes giving students more power, transparency, or dignity gets removed. In this system, students are customers. Faculty and staff are liabilities. And the real stakeholders are the people sitting quietly behind the curtain whose names students never hear.

The SGA Shuffle

When students at CCP talk about their own governance, the Student Government Association (SGA), they tend to do so with a mix of confusion and exhaustion. For years under Faculty Advisor Jeffrey Markovitz, the SGA has been mired in interpersonal squabbles, unchecked dysfunction, and a persistent sense that it answers more to administration than to students.

That dynamic snapped into focus with the fall of Frank Scales, the last SGA President who dared to challenge the system.

Scales fought for a student seat on the Board of Trustees and won it. He called for stronger student representation in campus decisions. But he is a conservative and endorsed Donald Trump for President in November. And, when he threw a Winter Formal that was approved for the day of his girlfriend's birthday, the political turned dramatical.

Impeachment, removal, and a retroactive rewrite of the rules to make sure he could never return.

After his ousting, Scales attempted to run for SGA President again only to be barred under a newly enforced one-year term limit. The rule had never been applied to past presidents, including his predecessor Khaneef Martin who spent part of his second term as president enrolled at Drexel University, and was nowhere to be found in the SGA Constitution at the time. The change was introduced at a General Assembly meeting on February 24, under the watchful eyes of Faculty Advisor Jeffrey Markovitz, Administrative Advisor Jenavia Weaver, and Dean of Students Brad Kovalski. With their backing, the rule became de facto law that SGA was no longer a platform for independent student leadership. SGA is and will continue to be an arm of administrative gatekeeping.

The new front-runner and sole candidate for SGA President, Maria Baez, previously served as Treasurer and was a vocal critic of Scales. She and her allies, including 1st Vice President Angie Orozco and 2nd Vice President Jaritsa Hernandez-Orsini, have consistently aligned themselves with Markovitz's hands-off approach to student empowerment. The SGA's energy has turned inward, consumed by procedural squabbles and petty allegiances instead of tangible action for students.

The more power SGA gains on paper, the less it seems to do. And that is likely by design. If students in and around SGA are busy bickering, sidelining ambitious members, and orbiting the whims of administrators, it won't be organizing students to demand SEPTA transpasses, set up our own on-campus events, or have a say over the General College Fee.

If the administration wants a student government that looks professional, they'll need to let it do something. Division and distraction are a feature, not a bug. We are watching student leaders pretend to govern while the real decisions are made behind closed doors.

A Play for Real Representation

The past year has shown us exactly how power operates at the Community College of Philadelphia. Those who push for dignity get punished. Those who demand oversight have unanswered complaints disappear. And when we call for shared governance, they call security. The lesson is not subtle, but it is exhausting.

Students do not choose the Board of Trustees, approve the college president, nor have a say in how our budgets are spent. Even the Student Government, the one place where students should have responsibility, has been gutted, sanitized, and refashioned as another PR wing for administrators.

A democratic student union, open to all students, not just the well-connected or administrator-approved, may be the only path left to real accountability. This cannot be another power trip, run like a clique or personality cult.

We have already made an attempt at a student union on campus. It is now steered by 2nd Vice President Jaritsa Hernandez-Orsini, the same SGA officer who's aligned herself with the administration's quiet campaign against student autonomy. What students do not need is a closed-door, shadow SGA with a new hierarchy dressed in radical branding.

Horizontal power is the only feasible structure to build the power to stand up to the governance of the college. A collective, student-led body that anyone can join to make decisions together in assemblies regardless of major or identity. A place where students are treated as people with power, not pawns in a bureaucratic game.

There's still no public process to select the next college president and no public vision for what kind of leadership this college deserves. But whoever that next president is, they will answer to the Board unless we give them someone else to answer to. If students want smaller classes, free SEPTA transpasses, safer campuses, and actual say over how our tuition and fees are spent, we will not get it by asking individually and politely.

Organize without bosses, without idols, and without permission. And when in doubt, humbly ask: who does this college serve?

Published April 21, 2025

Towards the Abolition of the Presidency

CHARLIE ALLISON, FORMER ADJUNCT FACULTY REP FOR FEDERATION

The office of the President of the Community College of Philadelphia is harmful and should be abolished. The latest president was a practical study in everything wrong with the office of the presidency: its top-down, arbitrary use of power and money, its nominal role (fundraising and self-promotion) a crude joke, and its profoundly anti-democratic nature clear. However, in this, Dr. Donald Guy Generals was not exceptional, merely acting as most college presidents do under neoliberal capitalism.

Indeed, nobody could make the office of the presidency at CCP morally or practically justifiable, whatever their intentions and character. The presidency as it stands does not reflect the interests of the students, faculty and staff of the Community College of Philadelphia. It is at best a vehicle for the rich to become richer and at worst an active opponent of the best interests of the students, faculty and staff of the college.

We don't have a president now and we shouldn't have one in the future.

In fact, not having a president at CCP might be one of the smartest things we could possibly do collectively to make sure that those most impacted by the decisions the college makes are the ones making those decisions—that is, the students, faculty and staff of the college.

But first, a quick history lesson:

Dr. Generals' tenure was a showcase of all the president can do to hamstring the college's stated mission while enriching themselves. For example, the office of the presidency comes with a salary well north of 300k a year, which includes a housing and car stipend. Meanwhile, a not insignificant number of students are uncertain of where their next meal is coming from, how they will get to campus for classes or where they will sleep safely that night.

Speaking of money, remember last year when Dr. Generals refused to ask City Hall for additional funds to make badly needed operational repairs to the college? He smugly said "We're quite comfortable with the

level of support City Hall has given us. They've been very generous." In short, the president of the college refused to aid his own college and do his self-described job as chief fundraiser for the institution.

The Union and the students, undeterred by the typical display of craven bootlicking demonstrated by the presidency, organized a campaign together. Together we won **5 million dollars** from City Hall—a quarter of the 20 million we had asked for but still the largest one year monetary increase in the history of the college. However, Dr. Generals and the board refused to disclose where the five million dollars we won was going to be spent, confirming only that it had been received. The board of trustees is also an obstacle to actual democratic governance of CCP but let us stay on topic here.

The above incident demonstrates two things: that the office of the president (a position inflicted upon the students, faculty and staff by the mayor of the city, like a wizard's curse or some sort of telemarketing scam) is extremely undemocratic.

The president of CCP is a glorified toady, flunky, sycophant, loyalist, Quisling, court favorite etc. of whoever the mayor of Philadelphia happens to be. The president's interest is in pleasing their boss—the mayor—and staying in the office of the presidency.

This is a deliberate structural flaw in how CCP is run—it is hard to conceive of a system less kindly disposed towards democratic governance. The trouble with the presidency is structural, not personal—no matter how fun it might be to rightly lampoon a man named Dr. Donald Guy Generals. **The office of the president is meant to consolidate power in one set of hands, which means taking it away from people who learn and teach at the college.**

This brings us rather neatly to our second point—which is the constructive, rather than the destructive case for the abolition of the presidency. The students and workers of the Community College of Philadelphia have shown that they can and do organize to fundraise for the college, raise awareness of the (many) plights of CCP and are perfectly capable of self-governance.



We have very clear recent examples of the power that student faculty and staff can wield—see the 5 million dollar example above, as well as mobilizations around free SEPTA transpasses and childcare on campus (currently ongoing). Students, tired of administration censorship and austerity, created their own newspaper on a shoestring that still is enormously helpful and informative.

The \$300k that is thrown away in the presidential salary and perks could be put towards repairing central air for classrooms that are either boiling or freezing (seemingly at random), updating technology (like the computer lab), maintaining facilities like bathrooms or helping efforts to resolve student homelessness, hunger and debt—just off the top of my head.

It is the permanent cry of the dead-inside, the apparatchik, sell-out and coward that if only we had the right people in charge of a bad system then the system would function better—but in the case of CCP, the system is functioning as intended—to Hoover money from students upwards to the already rich.

So what should we do, what are the practical steps to be taken?

There is a lot to do. It all starts with building on the victories that the students and workers of CCP have already won and proceeds on as direct as possible along democratic principles.

- The charter of CCP will have to be re-written to cut out the office of the presidency.
- Continue student assemblies, the organization of student-led things without administration's 'blessing' or funds.
- Collaboration between students, faculty and staff—for example, publicly making sure that the administration carries out the terms of the latest contract (i.e. free SEPTA trans-passes, on campus child-care, retro-pay, etc.)
- Actively campaign against the idea of the presidency: all that office has done is hoard money and give us bullshit lion statues.
- When an interim president is appointed (as seems likely), ignoring any and all demands/requests/policies they put forward and denying the legitimacy of their (inflicted) 'authority'.
- Build dual power—work directly with the student body and the faculty and staff (via the Federation of Faculty and Staff) to enact changes that are within our power to win/create without dealing with administrators whenever possible.
- What money we as workers and students win from organizing and fundraising from anywhere—City Hall, the state of Pennsylvania—we should have the figurative teeth to enforce that it is spent where it is needed: towards the common, material goods for the students, faculty and staff as well as a significantly expanded voice in deciding where the yearly budget money is spent.

Students, faculty and staff can run CCP better than any mayor-appointed albatross of a president ever could.

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4/29/25 - CITY COUNCIL HEARING W. DR.GENERALS 1:30-4:00PM @ CITY HALL (ROOM 400, FLOOR 4) 4/30/25 - CITY COUNCIL PUBLIC COMMENT 9:30AM @ CITY HALL	E	W	V		C	
	R	E	L	S	V	E
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Weather

Monday April 21	Tuesday April 22 Earth Day	Wednesday April 23	Thursday April 24	Friday April 25
Cloudy High of 67° Low of 58°	Partly cloudy High of 79° Low of 54°	Partly Cloudy High of 77° Low of 53°	Partly Cloudy High of 78° Low of 52°	Evening Rain High of 76° Low of 61°

Comic BY ANAS Q



Review: *Miz Prophet Tells All*

Reimagines the Myth of Cassandra

Student playwrights encourage the voice of the unheard in a student-conceived, -written original production that crackles with youthful insight.



M.P. HASSEL

In *Miz Prophet Tells All*, Cassandra's ancient curse finds new life in the basement of a fractured family, where voices clamor to be heard and truth echoes like static between bodies. Created by student playwrights Yerancy Acevedo, Thaddeus Bey, and Justin Hart, this year's spring production by Community College of Philadelphia's Theater Department ran from April 15 through 18 in the Black Box Theater.

The set featured two walls, lined with shelves of paint cans, chairs, and human-sized dolls. A painting on an easel stood mid-stage, eventually repositioned toward the rear as the play progressed. Three television screens played a prerecorded broadcast call and a presidential ad by the cast, while the audience, seated on low-rise platforms, flanked a central alley that doubled as an entrance and, crucially, the basement staircase. The entire room worked in unison to evoke the claustrophobia of Liliana's world, lending the sense that we, too, were locked down there with her, our only view of escape a staircase through which people descended to enter and ascended to exit the stage.

The play unfolds as a linear series of vignettes, each one tugging us deeper into Liliana's isolation and defiance. She is grounded to her basement by TV mogul parents for interrupting a broadcast to warn people of her visions of imminent disaster, Liliana is caught in a crisis of credibility, because her warnings are true but ignored by all except her most loyal companions: her playmates.

These playmates - Rose, Stag, and TV Head, among others - are not quite real, but their characters are no less vital. They share Liliana's basement world, forming a strange, tender conglomerate. Darqui Garcia's Stag, a mollusk man with a scarf and tweed, offers anxious comic relief and the grounding warmth lacking in Liliana's tincture, particularly in a moment where he reassures Liliana that "There are no mistakes in painting"—only to quickly revise himself when her attempt to paint hands comes out like stubs: "There are some mistakes."

Rose, played by Lulu Florea, floats through space like a memory, a flapper in blue. Her quiet sweetness makes a welcome contrast to Liliana's toppling demeanor. From the writing, the audience can understand their bond to be very close, but the pair lacked the cooperative emotional intensity.

Liliana herself, portrayed by Bethzaida Soto, is a force. Soto imbues every movement with physical urgency. Her Liliana is angry and alert to all collapse, hypocrisy, and tragedy. She wants to be an artist but cannot yet paint hands convincingly. Stag encourages her, and Hector later jokes that paws would be easier. This thread of artistic incompleteness becomes symbolic of her struggle to be understood, to reach out.

TV Head, portrayed by Peter Chen, was a particular delight, flickering between the nervous sidekick and audiovisual guide, the lines were prone to be delivered too quickly. Physically, he gave the character a light energy, dancing immediately upon entry and always dynamic. With technology on his head and a computerized cadence akin to BMO in *Adventure Time*, he oriented the audience to the screens above for a video or center-stage for a broadcast vignette from news anchor Marina and rockstar weathergirl Miss Magenta, played by Melek Ercan and Mikayla Matthews.

Later, Mazi, played by Mody Diakite, joins the campaign against Liliana's parents. His presence charges the air with anxious energy, disrupting the rhythm just enough to spark transformation, or at least the possibility of it. These playmates are extensions of Liliana's psyche, or projections of her longing for voices that see her, challenge her, and believe her.

Her family, played with sharp contrast by the supporting cast, defines itself through greed. Sol, her father, is played with cold authority by Jarrell Brooks-Lyons, who leans into a conniving posture with a downward gaze, to diminish Liliana in every encounter. In a play about power and perception, this unintentional visual irony could not have been pushed further to subvert the script's hierarchical tension lest he act the patriarch with chin high with pride. Phoebe, Liliana's mother, is performed by Esther Pavlov with theatrical flair. Her character's break comes not with her daughter, but with her husband, Sol, on a vignetted broadcast apology for her Liliana's behavior. In a moment of shrieking hysteria that teeters into comedy, Sol shrugs her embrace to conclude the broadcast and land the punchline. It borders on the comedic, yet Pavlov balances it with a simmering distaste for her daughter that feels all too real. Orayuan Gonzalez, as Troy, the self-styled "President Business," leans into his character's performative bravado. His confidence in monologue is undeniable, though his quieter moments strain under the weight of sincerity. Still, his stage presence and control suggest incredible potential.

Then there is the dog, Hector, played by Trung Cung, who is truly the only one of her family in her corner, but perhaps the most overtly comedic role. His embodiment of a spaniel has full carnival face art, floppy dog ears, and a wryly British accent. At one point, he barks at Liliana with such conviction that the audience flinched like a collective mail courier and returned to laugh in the same breath. But beyond the laughs, Hector sits at the edge of the real world, entering and exiting at the top of the staircase, the play's most imaginative piece of stagecraft, where the light suggests an open door. His presence there makes him a kind of sentinel, beckoning Liliana toward release, or reintegration, or some upward motion.

The family members use that staircase too. Sol, in particular, after he is done circling and mocking Liliana ascends the alley and off-stage treats, but calls back to Hector like a pet, then mocking him with commands like “want walkies?” The staircase frames the play’s fundamental question as ‘who climbs, and who remains below?’

Technically, the play makes effective use of lighting and repetition. The broadcasts Liliana sees are projected on the screens or acted live centerstage in focused lighting but still across the basement backdrop. News, memories, and visions all happen in the same confined space. This visual choice reinforces the idea that her entire world is filtered through her confinement. The repetition, particularly when her family circles her reciting lines from earlier on under strobe lights, achieves a chilling effect, like sharks encircling her in dark water. That moment nearly collapsed under wobbly timing in the overlap of lines but recovered quickly.

If the play falters, it’s in pacing. Some repetitions run too long. At one point, characters belabor the naming of her livestream - “Miz Prophet Tells All” - as if arriving at an epiphany the audience reached much earlier. Literary allusions come thick and fast, sometimes to the point of drowning the emotional core of the scene. In these moments of rapid dialogue, the script wants to be urgent and layered, but the lines suffocate emotional clarity within their natural cadence.

Still, Miz Prophet Tells All dares to ask what prophecy looks like not from Mount Olympus, the pulpit, or official office, but from a basement, where a girl with visions of hurricane winds and highway pileups tries to reach the surface. In the end, she doesn’t climb the stairs. With her family scattered off on Election Day to Venezuela, her presidential candidate brother reportedly a felon, Liliana stays below. She says goodbye to her playmates as they entreat her to push on. She paints perfect pink hands on the canvas and walks toward the audience, palms up.

It is a gesture of both surrender and self-assuredness. Liliana claims the basement as Soto claimed the stage as Acevado, Bey, and Hart claimed the script. Her voice may not be welcomed or celebrated above, but it resonates here. The light at the top of the stairs glows warmly, but still indifferent. Hope lives in the persistence of voice, not in escape, but in echo.



Sexy Doctor Generals by Nick Gambacorta

On the Eve of Negotiations

Dr. Donald Guy Generals overlooks Spring Garden Street from the marble penetralium of his office in the Mint Building. He is a man of power, a man of discipline, a man who does not cave, undaunted by faculty protests, untouched by student unrest, unfazed by the rising demands not only from the bargaining table but beckoning from City Hall.

Yet late at night, in the corridors of the Mint Building, where whispers of revolution mix with the scent of lavender bleach, she lies in wait.

He ambles with low shoulders, prowling, easing his feet along the granite floors. Dr. Allen T. Bonnell, the first and founding president,

watches from his portrait, flanked by his successors, frozen eternally to their chairs, their childish smiles feigning ignorance of the empire they built.

Professor Faylinn sees through his bravado. The paralegal lecturer by day knows the truth: the faculty is underpaid, the students overburdened, but Dr. Generals, for all his awards and accolades, has yet to face the one battle he cannot win stammering through a specious speech.

He stops and feels the chill prickle down his vertebrae. He was nervous, but now he is fully unnerved. Illuminated behind by the cold corporate lighting of the hallway, her silhouette casts a long shadow before his unpolished black loafers. He falls into the umbra that is her body and the light ensnares him.

He lunges hard for a man of his age and grabs for her hips, considerably stronger than his own. Tenderly, but with a firm grasp, he pulls her in. She is breathless, speechless. His chest rises against hers, the weight of administration pressing against resistance.

"\$80 million in reserves," he murmurs, his voice smooth as the southwestern wind over the Schuylkill.

She bristles, pulling back like a sycamore rejecting Spring. Her breath catches. How dare he mock her? All day her Faculty and Staff Federation chanted about the college's financial standing.

He lunged again, grabbing her palm and waist. A dance. The congas tip-tip-tap-tippy-tapping away in the mind, irreverent of her tension. They play on and on as he sways meekly. Faylinn hears the rhythm through the silence. It beats against her like an argument she refuses to lose.

No. She clenches her fists. The bargaining table awaits. The contracts burn in her mind. Her coworkers needed raises over the next four years that account for inflation. Her students needed smaller class sizes and free SEPTA passes. All of it, with the pebbled sweat glimmering on his bald head, could get wiped away.

He shifts his hand naturally, bringing her closer to his chest, so she would not look at his forehead so inquisitively. The touch on the small of her back melts her coolness.

She was his, at his disposal, as was wont for any employee of his, especially of her stature.

The vice presidents, the meddling eunuchs of the administrative court, were eager to see what was now out of Bonnell's view. Quietly, they took turns sneaking eyefuls around the corner of the hallway before pulling back, whispering.

"He's slipping," said Dr. Dave Thomas, nervously stroking his chin and pulling his goatee in a fluid motion.

"He is too careless when we should be frugal." Jacob Eapen, the Vice President of Business or whatever had finances on the mind.

"Perhaps this is to our benefit. We can make this go out quietly." Dr. Shannon Rooney had a way of seeing the forest of communications through the meager trees her boss liked to see late at night.

Faylinn struggled against the weight of power and passion. She had come for battle. Not for this. And yet, she dropped to her knees.

A sharp intake of breath echoed against the cold marble walls.

~ ~ ~

The table, a polished void of institutional destitution, stretched long and unforgivingly between them. Dr. Generals sat stiffly, his gaze locked in on an inlaid ornate flower, refusing to meet a union eye, lest he happen to find hers.

Faylinn was unshaken. Across the table, she and the union bargaining committee sat tall and unyielding. The proposal being the same as the last and the administrative counterproposal just as meager as the last, the chant began, low and rhythmic, a hymn of solidarity that grew like a rising tide:

"They don't like us, WE DON'T CARE! They don't like us, WE DON'T CARE!"

The words crashed against him. He gripped the edge of the table, fingers white against the wood. He felt it: the lingering heat of the night before, the unspoken moment, the hesitation. He had already lost. He swallowed hard into his dry throat.

His cabinet of vice presidents flanked him, silent and watchful, their expressions hard like marble as Faylinn leaned forward. For the first time, he felt truly afraid.

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The Odd Lady

SANTIAGO RUSSO

Uhhmm... Hello, my name is Monica, and Ms. Robbins asked me to start writing in this diary in the afternoon before taking my nap. Even though somebody started it before, I can use it, so today will be the first for me.

I have not much to say; I wake up, take a shower, and brush my teeth while Ms. Robbins prepares oatmeal for breakfast, my favorite one! On my left sit Mr. Jones and Ms. Sally; they are always reading the newspaper and talking about topics that I cannot understand... or care about. While having breakfast, I take my vitamins even though I don't like them, but Ms. Robbins is so kind that I only take them for her.

Oh! I just remembered! There is an odd lady who comes every day. She is a tall, young woman. I think she is beautiful and always smiles at me, and I always smile back. I must add that she never sleeps very well, and her smile is a bit weird, because even though she denies it, she doesn't look fine while smiling. After she talks a bit with Ms. Robbins, she comes to me, takes my hand, and together we go out on adventures.

It doesn't last too long, but we normally go to the park and have a seat for a while. She seems like she wants to say something, but the words never come out... I never understood why this happens, and that's why normally I start the conversations. It is not too difficult, just asking her how she has been, what is her favorite color, and topics like that. She is very odd; I cannot explain why, but she looks at me in a weird way... I don't feel any hostility or bad intentions, but something feels odd, but I don't give it any importance.

After talking for a while, there comes my favorite part: ice cream! We walked together to the truck, and she let me pick first, and as always, I picked the only best option: Peppermint with Choco chips. After I had gotten mine, she made me guess which one she was going to pick, and for some reason, I think after seeing her, she always wanted strawberry flavor, and I was right!

While eating ice cream, we walked ahead home. Again, I feel that odd looking at me, and I am not sure because I was distracted with my ice

cream, but I think she almost did not eat hers. I wonder why she is like that; I know something is not ok with her, even though she always smiles towards me, her eyes always look tired, maybe long suffered, but she always tells me that she is fine... I wonder what is going on.

When we arrive at home, Mr. Jones is already taking a nap, and Ms. Sally is watching a drama, too dramatic for me actually. Anyway, I am also tired by that moment, so I prepare to take a nap. Before going to bed, I wait for the odd lady at the front door to say goodbye while she finishes talking to Ms. Robbins. When she comes to the exit, I say goodbye simply by saying, "See you tomorrow, miss!"

As I told you, my name is Monica, but every day, every time, the odd lady makes a mistake and says, "Goodbye, Mom..." Isn't that very odd? I mean, I'm just twelve years old.

That should be everything for now, so I'll continue writing after my nap. This is funnier than I thought!

To Dye, To Die

mulch stinks of commercial dye
spread hastily along the fringes.

a cherry tree stands too pink (dogwood
the same) and nervously blanches.

cyclamen crouch to conspire
in stretches of vacant grasses.

sparrows watch from the curb,
making dinner of filters and spilled sodas.

violas slouch
into the color they were sold as.

resist the paint and trust in what weed
grows sideways without fore design.