

The Post-Anarchist Party of San Salvador (or just PAPSS) had just received their first donation. It was an unexpectedly generous sum from an anonymous source. When the founding members of the party first created a Kickstarter site, they did not expect such an immediate response, let alone a fulfillment of their \$7,000 goal.

The aforementioned figure had been set with an underlying sense of humor. How could their family members and friends explicitly support such a peculiar cause? But there it was, they had reached their fictitious goal in one go; even though there was an uneasy feeling about who PAPSS could be theoretically answering to.

PAPSS' current Secretary, who went by the name of Stavrogin, was in charge of running the site and keeping tabs on its progress. He'd been originally cynical about this enterprise. His proposal to create a decoy site for a new dog shelter in San Salvador had been imperiously revoked by the rest of the party members.

Stavrogin's immediate reaction to the donation was as contradictory as the moniker he adopted. He was surprised, envious, a little bitter, but mostly afraid. Now they were a 'thing'

with funds. There was a real opportunity to make their idyllic proposals into realities. He informed PAPSS's current President straight away.

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There were obvious discrepancies among the members of PAPSS as to the legitimacy of a Presidency in a post-anarchist group. How could such a group be organized under oppressive and obsolete power structures? Why was there a need for organization in the first place? Of course, these clamors did not arise with the original functions of the group.

PAPSS was the chimera of what initially had been an unofficial university group comprised of a handful of philosophy and sociology students. These students shared several classes, ages, genders, and more importantly, cultural interests. They weren't precisely friends, but possessed a sort of intellectual camaraderie which brought them together.

Their initial meetings and anti-establishment activities were held in empty classrooms. They would seize them without permission along with the remotes to the overhead projectors, mostly on Friday afternoons. They would close the doors and use secret knocks. Curious janitors and other onlookers would be brushed away under rather creative pretenses.

The group was drawn closer by afternoons spent deconstructing *Synecdoche, New York*, rewriting the ending to *2666*, poetry related affairs, film appreciation, all things Spencer Krugg,

and visits to virtual museum galleries. Secret knocks became codes, first names turned into Dostoevsky character appropriations, and an interest in anarchism was radicalized by an unexpected event.

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It was mid-April, just a month into the spring semester. The corresponding campus authorities met with a few student organizations to discuss an important new legislation under consideration. It was one which had already been addressed by the corresponding national authorities after meeting with a few non-profit organizations and so on...

We are talking about the recent regulations regarding tobacco consumption in public spaces. Although the university in question is a private institution, it does receive considerable federal patronage. The corresponding campus authorities agreed that these regulations ought to be introduced inside the campus as a show of support, mostly because of said patronage.

This visibly shocked and infuriated the members of our little group beyond the languid and cynical demeanors they customarily adopted. Smoking indoors, even in their hijacked classrooms, had been a group pleasure; now being forcibly taken away from them to please faraway bureaucrats who'd still keep ashtrays on their desks.

Rogozhin, a young woman who adopted this name along with a discreet position of leadership within the group, called for an emergency meeting to discuss the matter. After a series of confusing email threads, she summoned everyone to a quiet green area overlooking the university football field. They could bring along a microwave and eat there for all she cared.

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It was a beautiful Tuesday afternoon. Vultures circled over the field and slivers of clouds unthreaded themselves across the sky. Rogozhin waited on a picnic table, scribbling in her notebook a list of ideas she wanted to discuss. Everyone arrived late, though mostly everyone arrived nonetheless.

Rogozhin made it clear she was not trying to be a leader. She simply wanted to get everyone together as soon as possible in light of the recent developments. She took out her pack of mentholated cigarettes and slammed them on the table. She said a series of remarks which in her mind could have been labeled ‘incendiary’.

There were various personalities within the group, including the sort of people who speak their minds animatedly precisely at times when it is not required of them. It is relatively unknown if there is a secret pleasure which motivates these individuals to act this way. But rest assured, Ivan, or the young man who dared to adopt this name, had a smile on his face.

Ivan blurted out that no one should have to listen to what he or anyone had to say for that matter. But he also made the case that he retrieved intelligence from the meetings in which the smoking ban was agreed upon. He thanked Rogozhin for her tact and quick thinking (she would always be Aglalya to him) but he came with a plan.

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According to Ivan, the smoking ban was created under a fundamentally flawed assumption: that the majority of the student body and staff were against second-hand smoke. This was ludicrous according to Ivan, since most people in El Salvador weren't even able to spell emphysema. Not only was the university rector an avid smoker, but so were the majority of the deans.

Ivan proposed a smoker's strike. They would spread the word of the strike through all the social media networks possible, along with the more classical methods. What these methods were, he could not say, but the idea was met approvingly by most of the group members present. Rogozhin however, was not among them.

Rogozhin had a secret. She was sick, not fatally so, but sick enough to prevent her from ever being a smoker. A few weeks ago her doctor handed her a little piece of paper which said she had the lungs of a 48 year old woman after completing a series of pulmonary tests. She had not touched a mentholated cigarette ever since.

Rogozhin was only a social smoker. Though she enjoyed how smoking felt; there was no disguising the fact that her lungs resented her stubbornness. There was a part of her that had experienced a sort of relief after hearing about the new legislation. She even looked forward to no longer having to hold her breath when walking into most of their impromptu meetings.

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The Smoker's Strike took place on a Monday during noon, when everyone was theoretically free from classes and other academic activities. The plan was simple for there was none. They were supposed to meet in the cafeteria. They were also encouraged to bring along other people, preferably smokers, to join in the movement.

Rogozhin arrived half an hour earlier and joined two empty tables right in the center of the cafeteria. She was waiting with a half-bitten torta and a grape soda, tapping her foot indiscriminately out of sheer anxiety. Only five people (herself included) seemed to have received her message which had been sent multiple times so that nothing was left to chance.

Ivan was the first on scene, choosing to sit directly in front of her to discuss a ska gig he secretly wanted to invite her to. Stavrogin was next, dragging along his current boyfriend: a communications student buried in his smartphone. And then there was Martín, the veteran, reliable Martín, an aspiring lawyer too mature for Dostoevsky and anyone pre-Pasternak (save for Gogol, naturally).

Rogozhin was the first to light her cigarette. Everyone else had mysteriously forgotten their lighters. The mentholated cigarette was passed around like a burning potato. The group then seemingly began to break their personal smoking records. The scene could have passed for an intricate choreography, a series of flexes and lung work, frenzied in their timing.

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And no one gave a shit, harsh as it may sound. Rogozhin was the last to put out her cigarette on the table. There were some dirty looks thrown their way, most of them well-founded; none of the future PAPSS members had actually controlled their aim when exhaling. They were too busy coughing, looking out for security guards, and cursing the day they ever disclosed their passion for the arts.

It remains unclear who was the first to stand up when they finished their cigarettes. Ivan was definitely the first to shout something along the lines of *¡Nos vale verga!* (the equivalent of *We don't give a fuck!*) Stavrogin's boyfriend meanwhile, flicked his cigarette up in the air. Stavrogin himself was the first to run, later claiming he spotted the university rector making his way over for lunch. As if he was the type to spend \$1.50 on a pizza combo #3!

Martín was the only one who decided to stick around for another smoke; that much is clear. The rest followed after Stavrogin, who jumped at least two flights of stairs on his way over to the main entrance. He set a furious pace, like a completely unexpected breakaway on a

mountain stage; think Contador following the chain incident. The other three chasers acted with just as much courage as Schleck.

And they caught on, just as Stavrogin reached the exit. They all stopped for a second, looked at each other, and decided to call their breakaway a success. And they were right: their shadows had given up the chase. So they came together in a big hug and decided to celebrate with Burger King, breaking their ban on multinationals for this triumphant occasion. And they completely forgot about Martín smoking his reds.

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Martín was unanimously named President of PAPSS the following day after an emergency meeting summoned by Rogozhin. It took place at the site of the Smoker's Rebellion, as they called it after one too many curly fries. Rogozhin was selected Vice President while Stavrogin propped himself up to Secretary (a post he was to serve with the help of his man, now officially Mr. Astley). Ivan unwillingly became the Head of Recruitment.

The rest of the old group was unceremoniously sent *¡A la mierda!* (*To the shit!* if directly translated from the original) Ivan even considered setting up a makeshift tribunal in an empty classroom to create a romanticized purge. But it wasn't necessary. Everyone outside of PAPSS considered the group something like a distant side of your family you never really want to run into. Even in funerals.

Mr. Astley was the first to suggest a Kickstarter page, making the case that it was all the rage in the States, and it would be an easier way to connect with other anarchist movements. This was predictably met with serious contention. Ivan was adamant about placing a red flag on anything relating to the States. Rogozhin was concerned with being just another anarchist group; there were already enough of them in San Salvador. Everyone admitted just as much.

So they agreed to be a new force: A new movement sprung from the revolutionary core of their university, willing to stand up to anything for any reason whatsoever. A new cause with no principles, models, or equals: the first Post-Anarchist Party of San Salvador. And they needed money because their first action had to be big, visible, and able to paralyze a small sector of the Cloudy Establishment. And Martín knew where to strike first.

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Martín, unlike his fellow PAPSS members, only took the bus to school when he felt particularly self-destructive and with an urge to get mugged or even worse. In most occasions his mother simply dropped him off on her way to work. Unlike his fellow PAPSS members, Martín could fit snugly inside that dreaded b-word his more radical professors liked to talk about in regards to class struggles.

Martín's father was a prominent authority in political education whilst his mother managed the production lines of a large chemical conglomerate. They lived in a gated

community with at least thirty armed security guards working in a single shift and all the safety related comforts which came along with it. Jogging outside is a luxury in a country sporting the highest homicide rates in the world.

Martín never disclosed his life outside of school, assuming he even had one. None of his fellow party members even pretended to call themselves his friend. Why? None of them could say with certainty. There was something off-putting about Martín, something about the way he carried himself, as if his mere presence was an obligation none of them understood.

But when it came down it, at least in Rogozhin's mind, Martín was a source of legitimacy. He'd been the acclaimed taste maker in the original group, who scoffed at dubbing when it came to English and French speaking films, and was the only one who bothered to read the likes of Goldman, Foucault, and Bukharin. He also didn't rub it in. So his voice mattered, especially at this crucial juncture, and he took the spotlight.

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This plan was also simple. If there was anything in abundance in Martín's neighborhood, it was the *muchachas* (or maids as they are correctly regarded in most places). In a combination of laughable minimum wages, contradictory affluence, and general laziness, *muchachas* are the hallmarks of middle to upper class transcendence. Do you hate your children, cooking, or general housework? Why not pay a stranger \$250 a month to take care of these things for you?

It doesn't take an episode of *Devious Maids* to know the power these employees hold over their work places. Just think of your household's deepest secrets, the wellbeing of your children, all in the hands of someone making less than minimum wage. Martín considered this an opportunity pull the most essential cog in the bourgeoisie apparatus from the inside out.

A syndicate was required, the first of its kind in Martín's mind. And then, a flat-out strike right outside the gates of his residential complex. But the big question loomed ahead. How do you form a clandestine labor union in an enclosed area under constant surveillance and with women who spend most of their days doing household chores?

The unexpected arrival of the \$7,000 on the newly formed PAPSS Kickstarter page further complicated things. Not only were the funds from a completely anonymous source, but they also represented tangible commodities the group members could desire. We're talking about young twenty year olds who couldn't make that much money in a year given their present circumstances.

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For a few minutes, PAPSS became a battleground over the uses of this fund. Then, the group members reconvened, adhered to their inexistent principles, and displayed a degree of bravery few can relate to post-anything. Martín came up with a plan consisting of an inside

woman, large bribes, secret meetings around swing sets, and civilian news reporting on social networks.

And the plan started with Delmy, Martín's lifelong nanny. It was hard for Martín to admit the existence of such exploitation in his own household. But the elephant was out, as he would say, and all the PAPSS members were allowed into his opulent three-story Victorian style home. His mother even left him money for pizza. Rogozhin was the only one with an open look of disillusionment, unnoticed by all, save the host.

But the elephant was out and Martín continued with his plan. Delmy knew several of the more popular muchachas in the complex, the ones with the most influence in a hierarchy of social interactions which took place around sandlots, basketball courts, and outdoor pools. Delmy would be in charge of bribing these community leaders to call for a strike on May Day.

The PAPSS members argued over the integrity, wastefulness, and plausibility of these measures. Deep inside, they all knew the sordid truth. They knew these women worked over twelve hours a day with no benefits, bringing home leftovers and ill-fitting clothes, whilst raising someone else's brats. These women had bigger things to worry about than their rights. A little bonus wouldn't hurt. In the end, they accorded that a \$100 per woman was fair.

Ivan, a well-documented drunk, managed to syphon off a small part of the Kickstarter funds to finance a thorough reconnaissance of several affordable brothels on the Thursday night before the strike. At some point during this regretful evening he called Rogozhin, professing his love to her, whilst an older woman smacked him in the buttocks with his red handkerchief.

Rogozhin was stoned out of her mind by the time she received Ivan's call. She put the phone on speaker by mistake and then just tossed it under her bed. Martín was lying next to her, naked, with three gummy worms hanging from his mouth. They laughed as quietly as they could while Ivan cried about a forlorn dream in a white ocean where he and Rogozhin came together in a single shadow.

Stavrogin and Mr. Astley spent their entire evening on the phone with each other. Neither of their parents wanted to admit how openly gay they were. On campus it was a different story altogether. But for now, they whispered to each other from two distant corners of the city, exchanging fears and insecurities, while occasionally commenting on the Portlandia episode they were simultaneously watching.

Delmy managed to convince her husband not to put his hands on her by giving him the \$300 she received for her services to the PAPSS cause. Some of the other women who accepted her bribe were not so fortunate. They did not call the police or report their stories to anyone.

They simply washed their faces and went to bed hoping for a better day. They did not think at all about the strike.

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None of the PAPSS members had morning classes that Friday. Mr. Astley drove his boyfriend and Ivan to the meeting point. The latter was crestfallen to find out Rogozhin had slept over at Martín's. He may have even thrown up a little as a result of this. But there was no time to react for the strike had begun. It was evident before they even reached the gates of the residential complex.

Pots and pans were beaten as fiercely as battle drums. Around fifty women marched up and down the street leading up to the main gates, chanting, and blocking all traffic with Delmy at the helm. Chaos ensued. The security guards manning the gates floundered about, receiving a volley of plastic sandals and empty purses. A long line of cars and minivans, increasingly late for work and school, honked in response from at least a kilometer away.

Mr. Astley was forced to park a few blocks from the entrance. The other two PAPSS members in his car were also at a loss for words. They behaved like someone who witnesses a raging fire for the first time and worries exclusively about the health of their lungs. Martín and Rogozhin just caught a glimpse of their car as they drove away, strangely coinciding with the arrival of the anti-riot police.

The two held hands and sat on the curb while the crowd turned its attention towards the officers wielding truncheons and guns with rubber bullets. They tried remaining in the same position while the police threw their first cans of tear gas. At this point Delmy came to rescue her little boy with blood splatters on her white apron. Martín smiled at her in the only way he knew how. The three of them were momentarily together and that's all that mattered to him.

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