

★ **Nothing Is Wrong and Here Is Why**

Alexandra Petri

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“At a certain point,” writes *Washington Post* columnist Alexandra Petri, “the nightmare becomes home.”

The entries of Petri’s collection are satirical dances through the most baffling moments of the Trump presidency, wherein truth is malleable and injustice reigns. Some read like twisted fairy tales. Within them, real-life people shift into more whimsical versions of themselves: Paul Manafort is a man who, backed into a corner by his posturing, really did end up spending almost \$1 million on carpets by accident; Melania, decked out in princess envy, walks through hungry forests of red trees and dreams of an easy life on a desert island.

Elsewhere, entries are more woeful about their fancies. Several wonder what it would be like if Trump lived up to his own hype: if he were actually a stable genius. If he were worried about ethics, or seemed capable of worrying at all. One envisions him holding Ivanka accountable for sending personal emails from a government server: “If justice were to remain in the land, any semblance of justice, she must bear the punishment ... ‘Lock her up!’”

Each biting, brilliant, laughter-prompting, and sob-inducing essay makes it clear that no such satisfactions are available. In their place, Petri skewers Trump’s first budget, with its apparent eagerness to “punch the impoverished in the face;” she reimagines the inauguration as “like the Oscars, but also like Woodstock, but also like the Super Bowl, but also like the Sermon on the Mount.” “I’m Fine with Women in Power, Just Not This One Specific Woman Currently in Power” is a perennial indictment of institutional sexism, while “It Is Very Difficult to Get This Train to Stop,” a weary, sobering tribute to women who speak up, laments “I am so tired of watching us jump. I am so tired of watching the trains keep going.”

Knowing, bold, and bleakly uproarious, *Nothing Is Wrong and Here Is Why* is an invaluable poultice for these troubled times.

MICHELLE ANNE SCHINGLER (May / June 2020)

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