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## Fairy Tales: A Compilation - The Mad Girl and the May Day Dogs

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# The Mad Girl and May Day Dogs

VAN BLEVINS

Languages and Literatures of Europe and the Americas 353 (20th Century Russian Arts and Culture)  
Mentor: Dr. Anastasia Kostetskaya

## Artist Statement

This short tale builds a world that attempts to reflect the barbaric tendencies of late capitalism. With inspiration from Chinese writer Lu Xun's *Diary of a Madman*, which was inspired by works by the earlier Russian writers Leo Tolstoy and Nikolai Gogol, I chose to extend this narrative by taking up a stance critiquing society through the lens of a young girl who just can't make sense of it. This tale fits neatly into the fairytale genre due to the traditional elements of magic and an imaginative protagonist. That being said, the story also attempts to break away from prosaic form in order to distinguish and escalate the primary conflict.

“We’ll be lucky if we get out of this with a pound of flour, let alone our health” Mama begrudgingly sighed out her words as Eunice mixed a slurry of grain and water with her fingers. “But I suppose we’ve been tested by worse before.” Bread was scarce and most local shops began rationing a quarter pound of flour per family, per day in the medium sized industrial city of Oldstown, due to a recent outbreak of hemoplexia. “Luckily, I have work to feed you little gremlins . . . well then, I’ll be off, have a good day my loves.” Eunice continued kneading and scraping the yeasted dough against the ancient oak table to shape. She was biding all her time out of primary school caring for her younger sister, Liena, and the family affairs.

“Oh little Liena, I only hope you can go through school without such hardships.” The dough continued to become more and more supple in Eunice’s cuff. “Life is like bread, the more you work it when it’s young, the tougher it will end up when it matures. I hope you don’t have to be as tough as me.” Eunice graced her table with flour and scored the sour rye with surgical precision. Baby Liena cooed, as babies do from time to

time, and drifted into her own world as Eunice sat the dough aside for a second proof.

\* \* \*

It was around noon when a pounding came to the door, Eunice learned from an early age to be cautious when her family got that dreaded knock at the door. Was it the neighbors? A distant family member asking for some money? God forbid it was a debt collector. Eunice’s most unimaginable fears came true when she peaked out of the small apartment to see it was Mr. Glouton, the landlord. “Breathe Eunice, just breathe” her mother’s voice echoed as she hid under the table of the small apartment. The knock grew harsher, and with that baby Liena began to wail and Eunice decidedly stood up, knowing she couldn’t run now. Briskly opening the door, she didn’t wear any fear on her face when she greeted the devilish fat man with “Mr. Glouton, how can I help you?”

At the sight of Eunice, the pudgy man let out an oink. “Well child, I’m afraid that your mother’s boss called to inform me she hasn’t shown up to work today and I wanted to leave a



My name is Van Blevins, I'm a triple major in Russian, Second Language Studies, and Japanese; I am also pursuing a minor in German. This work reflects my experiences growing up in an impoverished community as a child and is my attempt at conveying the working class' frustration with late-capitalist economic disparity and non-existent economic mobility. As I move along further in academia, I hope to continue to create opportunities to hear the voice of others who have been the victims of a system that wasn't built to serve them. I hope to pursue a master's degree and eventually a doctoral degree in sociology with a focus in class conflict studies.

message that whether she is sick or not, rent is due within the,” he oinked even louder this time, “week.”

Eunice’s heart dropped but she sternly, but as she observed her mother, replied with a “Fine.” and quickly shut the door without a goodbye or dismissal. ‘Just courteous enough but with no fear’ she thought to herself. But if her mother wasn’t at work, where was she? It wasn’t like her mother to take any detours on her way to the factory. Maybe she should go there herself, she considered. In this economy, and with the current state of the epidemic, none of her neighbors could likely do it for her.

Feeding the baby one last time before she set off, Eunice swaddled Liena against her chest. “I have to go but I promise I’ll be right back!” The baby fell fast asleep again and Eunice grabbed a tattered hand-me-down coat, making sure to secure a mask around her face, and ventured toward her mother’s workplace.

It was an average May day, grog covered the evening sun that should have been at its peak at this time, but the always-changing weather left Eunice both unbearably hot and wrenchingly cold. There was no one in the streets, that is, no one except for the Nobodies, of course. Groveling for spare change, the Nobodies were considered a class of people beneath people. Keeping her head down, holding her nose, Eunice passed quickly. She had to be back for Liena anyway, she reasoned with herself. Linguists often say that the thing separating animals and humans is complex language, but what of the animals that can speak perfect English? What of the animals that toil for their bread but are never able to get it? Drug addicts! Yes! They must be drug addicts!

Pacing past her school, the town center, she eventually reached the Oldstown Steel Mill within a swift 45 minutes. The old factory sat in between two other, newer, factories in the industrial district. It was the pride of the town at one point, but now it barely stood, its smokestacks looming over the city. Eunice had been here only once before on a school field day, but she remembered the layout just well enough to know the

floor her mom would be on if she was working—the third floor. She ran up a flight of gray steel stairs and headed down a long corridor. Eunice entered a surprisingly well-lit room to find what looked to be a long tea table where a number of dogs sat straight up dawning little green bibs with a full serving of roast duck neatly arranged in front of each. “Ma’am can I help you?” the voice came from a tall, lanky man.

Eunice: I was hoping to find my mom, or talk to someone . . .

Man: I’m terribly sorry mademoiselle, but as you can see the executives are currently having their lunch.

Eunice: Dogs....dogs? These dogs run my mother’s company!?

Man: Well yes, but did you see they’re wearing little bibs?

Eunice: Well yes but . . .

Man: These dogs were voted to the board because they showed exquisite skill in business management. They weren’t always dogs you know. Still they are well mannered with the way in which they eat the people.

Eunice: Eat the people?

Man: Yes! Your government officials, your landlord, the bosses, they all wish they could feast on the flesh of the people the same way these dogs do! If you’re lucky maybe one day they’ll employ you and eat you alive as well!

Eunice: No.

[The man put on a sickly grin.]

Man: Well then, I suppose you’d rather sleep on the streets.

Eunice: I guess the people on the streets are too skinny to eat?

Man: Yes, but they still have blood you dumb little thing, and at the end of the day, blood is what these animals run on.

Eunice backed away from the man and ran along the corridor, down the long flight of stairs, and out the door she entered from. She never returned to her mother’s factory.

And so, we hope that one May Day,  
The laborer’s life won’t end that way.