

19th C Diary by Iga

Dear Diary,

I woke up, as always, with the thick smog in my lungs and squished into an over packed bed. I can't remember a time the choking smoke wasn't there. It hovers in the sky like a giant piece of black cloth, trapping us with its ghastly fumes. There is no escape from my life, and not a single comfort. With both our parents dead, my siblings and I have no choice but to work in crowded mills or factories nonstop to barely scrape a living. We all come back late at night, dirtier and hungrier every single day.

We eat our breakfast in silence – a couple scraps for all of us – surrounded by a crowd of strangers carefully guarding the only food they have. The ground looks like just a layer of dirt and dust, but apparently there are floorboards there as well, somewhere... The table's also dirty, and you can see many of the meals eaten there before. There are so many stains and burns; you can barely see the wood of the table. The disgusting smell of the sewage coming from outside, combined with the never washed bodies of the people around me make me gag. At least I have work to get out of here.

Did I imagine, for one moment, that work would be better? Well, I was wrong, I was very wrong. The mill is the same as the shack we call home, but with so much *work*. We've heard gruesome stories of being scalped, or even crushed by the giant machines, though fortunately, I've never seen that happen.

After another tiring day of work, I still can't get to sleep. Miserable questions constantly haunt me: What did we do to deserve this? Why is it us who have to suffer, so that the rich can live comfortably. It isn't my fault, or our siblings, that our parents, or theirs, were poor, so why do we have to pay? But I can't stop thinking – if we had been born into a family living in a mansion, would we be like them? Would we stare at the working class like filth? Deep down, I think it'll never change.