Mayn Rue Plats

This poem was written as a result of the Triangle Shirtwaist factory fire of 1911, in which 175 women were killed. It was a response to (and indictment of) the terrible conditions in the sweatshops of that time. It combines the form of popular Yiddish love songs with a song of political protest.

Nit zukh mikh, vu die mirten grinen,
Gefinst mikh dortn nit, mayn shats.
Vu lebns velkn bay mashinen,
Dortn iz mayn rue plats.

Nit zukh mikh, vu die feygl zingn,
Gefinst mikh dortn nit, mayn shats.
A shklaf bin ikh, vu keytn klingn,
Dortn iz mayn rue plats.

Nit zukh mikh, vu fontanen shpritsn,
Gefinst mikh dortn nit, may shats.
Vu trern rinen, tseyner kritsn,
Dortn iz mayn rue plats.

Un libst du mikh mit varer libe,
To kum tsu mir, mayn guter shats.
Un hayter oyf mayn harts, dos tribe,
Un makh mir zis mayn rue plats.

[Don't look for me where myrtles are green,
You will not find me there, my beloved.
Where lives wither at the machines,
There is my resting place.

Don't look for me where birds sing,
You will not find me there, my beloved.
I am a slave, where chains ring;
There is my resting place.

Don't look for me where fountains spray,
You will not find me there, my beloved.
Where tears flow and teeth gnash,
There is my resting place.

And if you love me with true love,
So come to me, my good beloved,
And lighten up my heavy heart,
And make sweet my resting place.]