Even if you had a Tatar complexion,
even if you had tomcat eyes,
and even if you had a little limp,
or had wooden legs,
I would say, “It doesn’t bother me.”

Even if you had a foolish smile,
or were an utter simpleton,
even if you were as unrefined as a wild Indian,
even if you were as common as a coarse Galician Jew,
I’d say, “It doesn’t bother me.”

“Tell me, how do you explain it?”
Okay, I’ll tell you why:

Because to me you’re beautiful,
to me you have grace,
to me you’re one of a kind.

To me you’re great,
to me you have “it,”
to me you’re more precious than riches.
Many beautiful girls have wanted me,
and from all of them I chose only you.
Because to me you’re beautiful,
to me you have grace,
to me you’re one of a kind.

ven du zolst zayn shvarts vi a toter,
ven du host oygn vi bay a koter,
un ven du hinkst tsu bislekh
host hiltsner fislekh,
zog ikh, “dos art mikh nit.”

ven du host a narishn shmykhrl,
un ven du host vayzoses seykhl,
ven du bist vild vi an indiyaner,
bist afile a galitsyaner,
zog ikh, “dos art mikh nit.”

zog mir vi erklersitu dos?
kh’vel dir zogn bald farvos:

vayl bay mir bistu sheyn,
bay mir hostu kheyln,
bay mir bistu eyner af der velt.

bay mir bistu gut,
bay mir hostu “it,”
bay mir bistu tayerer fun gelt.
fil sheyne meydlekh hobn shoyln gevolt nemen mikh.
un fun zey ale oysgekilbn hob ikh nor dikh.
vayl bay mir bistu sheyn,
bay mir hostu kheyln,
bay mir bistu eyner af der velt.
IKH HOB DIKH TSUFIL LIB
Composer: Alexander Olshanetsky  Lyrics: Chaim Tauber

Now I am left alone
with my longings, with my pain.
I have picked the cards,
and I seek my good fortune in them.

He has replaced me with another.
He cannot understand my great love.
He’s going off to marry the other one,
while I remain forlorn and alone.

Oh, who needs these cards.
For naught have I waited and yearned.
My youth is already buried.
Fortune has made a fool of me.

I love you too much.
I do not bear any hatred for you.
I love you too much
To be angry at you.
I love you too much
To be at all angry with you.
They say I’m a fool,
I know. I love you.
I gave my life away to you,
My heart and my soul.
I am sick, but my thoughts
Turn not to revenge.

I love you too much...
EYN KUK AF DIR
Composer: Alexander Olshanetsky      Lyrics: Jacob Jacobs

General Vitalin:
Ever since I first noticed you,  
something strange has happened. 
What it is I stand here and contemplate. 
I’ll tell you simply:  
Everybody knows that because of you,  
I’m a changed man.  
You have thrown a spark into me, and it glows.  
You have now utterly disrupted my spirit.

Esther: 
I cannot understand it,  
how it could happen. 
And it amazes me without end  
that I, a poor Jewish girl  
with an old, ragged dress, 
should make such an impression on you.  
You always keep company only  
with rich, beautiful ladies.  
How is it you suddenly think of me?

Both:  
Just one look at you,  
is enough, my dear!  
You have already won my true love,  
and you will remain the crown of my heart.  
I know, my dear, that they  
will separate the two of us.  
But still the moment I first met you  
will remain sacred to me.  
Just one look at you ...

Vitalin: 
zayt kh'hob dir derzen, 
iz epes do geshen.  
vos dos iz, shtey ikh un trakht.  
ikh zog dir gants prost,  
zey veysn az du host  
a nayer mentsh fun mir gemakht.  
du host a funk aranyevoorfvn un er glit.  
du host tseshtert ingantsn mir yetst mayn gemit.

Esther: 
kh'ken dos nit farshteyn, 
vi es ken geshen. 
un es vundert mir on shier. 
ikh an orem yidish meydl 
mit an alt tserisn kleydl, 
zol makhn aza ayndruk gor af dir. 
du bist shteyndik nor tsuzamen, 
mit di raykhe, shene damen. 
vi kenstu plutsem trakhtn gor fun mir?

beyde:  
eyn kuk af dir, mayn tayere!  
iz dokh genug, mayn tayere!  
du host gevunen shoyn, dayn emes fardintn loyn,  
un du vest zayn fun mayn hartsn di kroyt.  
ikh veys az undz beydn, tayere,  
vet men tsesheydn, tayere!  
dokh blaybt mir, heylik der moment,  
ven ikh hob zikh mit dir bakent.  
eyn kuk af dir iz dokh genug ...
A MALKE AF PEYSEKH
Composer: Louis Gilrod

Passover is a joyous time;
the Jew is then a king.
He sits with his queen all adorned.
At the seder table along with the kharoysies [sweet ritual condiment]
and the four cups of wine.
The queen lifts the washbasin to him in his “royal” chair.
This king is so happy with his world.
He smiles at his queen, and he beams.

He who has a queen on Passover,
is happy and joyful, that I know.
A queen like a doll,
with her little princesses
in their holyday finery,
with matza cakes and with matza balls—
a queen on Passover is the best thing.

Listen to this story—to what happened
to a cousin of mine.
Hear just what kind of luck he had;
Oy, what a mess.

He’d had enough of being single,
so he bought a wedding ring
and married a beautiful girl.
He fixed up a flat
with a bed and a table, and prepared a luncheon.
And this happened just before Passover.
The next day after the wedding, listen to this,
she shows up with twins from her first husband.

Oy, now he has a queen on Passover, all right.
He’s suffering and is in pain, that much I know.
A queen like a doll
with her little princesses!
Now he has a problem with her,
and he asks her, “What’s going on here?”
A queen on Passover, now, what do you think of that?
GLIK
Composer: Alexander Olshanetsky      Lyrics: Bella Meisel

Now I stand and think:
What a strong power
fate holds over everyone.
One moment it makes a joke;
then it quickly turns to rage.
It can damn you and also bless you.

If it was up to me,
if only I could
change your strange fate,
I would set you free,
renew your life as well,
and for your happiness I would pray.

Happiness, you’ve come to me,
but a bit too late.
Good fortune, you have arrived
and filled my heart with such joy.
I do not want to think now
what fate will bring me tomorrow,
so long as I have at least one moment
when fortune is in my hands,
and I get to dance the last dance with you.
LEBN ZOL KOLUMBUS

Composers: Arnold Perlmutter and Herman Wohl      Lyrics: Boris Thomashevsky

America is a shtetl!
Where, I swear, life is great.
The Divine rests on her;
we should all get to live so.
Wars, guns, or bloodshed
we need like a hole in the head.
Who needs an [imperial] ruler?
The hell with kings.

Ay, it’s great,
everyone sing along:
Long live Columbus!
Brothers, drink a toast to life—/hayyim/
Oh, long live Columbus
for discovering this new land!
Be merry!
Pay no heed to the grumblers.
Jews, shout:
Long live Columbus!

For girls, America
is a great place, a paradise,
for boys here are plentiful like the sands of the sea,
a pleasure, Oh, what a life.
You don’t need a dowry,
The hell with matchmakers.
And if a chump wants to marry for money,
he’s liable to wind up with a wife no one else would marry.
Oh, it’s good,
girls sing along:

Long live Columbus!...
A gute heym
Composer: Alexander Olshanetsky      Lyrics: Jacob Jacobs

I have written many songs, but in my heart
only the song of the old country remains.
It is full of soul, and it brings me great solace
whenever I remember it.
A home is love, as everyone knows.
And one who has never had a home
feels a deep longing and realizes
that only he who has a home is happy.

A good home is a blessing from God.
A good home, whatever kind a person has.
What can be lovelier
than being in your own home
together with your mother and father?

Life can be all right elsewhere, but it’s nothing like home.
Only life at home
with father and mother
is truly good.
NU, ZOG MIR SHOYN VEN
Composer: Alexander Olshanetsky      Lyrics: Jacob Jacobs

Misha:
You can trust me,
I will build a future for you.

Tootsie:
Tell me when, tell me when.

Misha:
You are my beloved, and you are precious to me.
I would walk through fire for you.

Tootsie:
Tell me when, tell me when.

Misha:
There is no other woman in the world
who would interest me,
even if she should give me
millions of dollars and diamonds.
If ever I should even come close to being
unfaithful to you, may I drop dead.

Tootsie:
So tell me already, when will my heart will be quieted?

Misha:
So tell me already, when will my happiness be
complete?

Tootsie:
In the middle of the night I often abruptly awake.

Misha:
For hours I ponder what will become of me.

Both:
So tell me already when; answer me already and say it.
Just tell me when the date will be set,
when I will live to see myself standing
under the wedding canopy with you.
So just tell me when, just tell me when, just say it.

Misha:
du megst zikh af mir fartroyen,
kh’vel far dir a tsukunft boyen.

Tootsie:
zog mir ven, zog mir ven.

Misha:
du bist bay mir lib un tayer,
ikh vel geyn far dir in fayer.

Tootsie:
zog mir ven, zog mir ven.

Misha:
nishto keyn froy mer af der velt
zol mikh interesirn,
ven zi zol mit milyonem gel
un daymonds mir batsirn.
oyb ikh zol a mol probirn
dir vern falsh, zol ikh mayn kop farlirn.

Tootsie:
u, zog mir shoyn ven vet zayn mayn harts geshtilt.

Misha:
u, zog mir shoyn ven vet zayn mayn glik farfilit.

Tootsie:
in mitn nakht plutslem khap ikh zikh fil mol oyf.

Misha:
shtunden ikh trakht vos vet zayn fun mir der sof.

beyde:
u, zog mir shoyn ven; entfer mir shoyn un zog.
u, zog mir shoyn ven vet zayn bashtimt der tog.
vel ikh derlebn mikh tsu zen
mit dir unter der khupe tsu shteyn.
u, zog mir shoyn ven, zog mir shoyn ven, nu zog.
The Jew might be poor; still he’s very wealthy, for he’s rich with spiritual treasures. The Jew is patient; his faith in God is great. Even the inferno doesn’t consume him. He is considered a descendant of kings, of honored lineage and wealth, yet every country slams the door in his face.

He laments and he weeps; he can’t take any more. Even his laugh, oy, is mixed with a tear. When it sometimes happens that things go well for him, the world soon reminds him that he is a Jew, and they again hand him his “wandering stick,” and he must search for a new home.

When their New Year arrives, all other people sing and dance until they drop from exhaustion. But the Jew on Rosh Hashana sits in the synagogue with pious intent and hears the cantor sing a different kind of song: “Standing in the presence of Him who dwells in the midst of the glorious praises of the people of Israel, I become more and more aware of the poverty of my deeds and abilities and am overwhelmingly frightened and humbled. Nevertheless, I am here before You pleading on behalf of Your people Israel, for it is they who have sent me.”

Enter the synagogue on Yom Kippur eve and you will hear the cantor sing with great emotion: “We declare that any and all personal vows, oaths, obligations, undertakings, or pledges that we might make as a commitment to God and involving only our relationship to Him—that if subsequently the oath be forgotten or is not able to be fulfilled, then let it be that beginning on this Yom Kippur and extending to next year’s Yom Kippur, these vows are abandoned and made null and void.”
But it also happens at times
that Israel is merry
and sings joyously, with abandon,
as it happens on the holy day of Simhat Torah:

"Celebrate, be happy on Simhat Torah.
Torah is our treasure, our honor.
Its value is beyond any reckoning.
Its precious worth is more than can be perceived.
So exult over this, our Torah.
It is our strength and our light.”

ober se makht zikh oykh a mol,
ven oykh freylekh iz yisroel,
un er zingt zikh freylekh, on moyre,
ven es kunt on simkhes to’ye:

“sisu v’simtʃu b’simут at tora,
utnu kavod latora,
ki tov sah’ra mikal shhora
mipaz umip’ninim y’kara.
nagil v’nasis b’zot hatora
ki hi lanu oz v’orah.”
MIT DIR IN EYNEM
Composer: Ilia Trilling    Lyrics: Isidore Lillian

What was, was;
now wipe away your tears
and look toward the future.

Over bygone days
I continue to brood,
which causes me great pain.
I was missing a life partner
until I met you.

Believe me that
I would give my life for you.

You make me truly happy now.
I will sweeten your life.
My love, I want you to know that.

Together with you—
and other than you I need no one.
It’s my greatest joy
When I take a look at you.
Together with you
in a fine little love nest.
You are like sweet wine
right here in my heart.
Your face shines and glows like the moon.
You are a gift sent from God, my love.
Together with you,
as with my father with my mother.
Say it, my heart and soul,
say that you will always be with me.

vos geven, iz geven.
vish oys dayne tren,
in der tsukunft kuk arayn.
fun di teg, vos farbay,
haft ikh in eyn klern,
dos farshaft mir gjoryn payn.
gefleht hot mir a fraynd in lbn
biz ikh hod bagegnt dikh.
gloyb es mir, az far dir,
mayn lebn vel ikh gebn.
emes gliklekh itst makhstu mikh.
ikh vel dayn lebn farzisn,
libste, ikh vil du zolst visn.
mit dir in eynem,
un on dir darf ikh keynem.
s’iz dos grestn glik,
ven ikh gib a kuk af dir.
mit dir in eynem
in a libes-nest a sheynem,
bist vi ziser vayn,
do in harts arayn bay mir.
dayn ponem laykhnt un shaynt vi di levone,
du bist geshikt fun got mir a matone, neshome.
mit dir tsuzamen,
vi mayn tate mit mayn mamen.
zog neshome mayn,
zog veshtur tomed zayn mit mir.
MAYN YIDISHE MEYDLE
Composer: Sholom Secunda  Lyrics: Anshel Schorr

I have seen many women;
among every people they are different.
But none is as beautiful
as a Jewish woman.

A Jewish girl immediately enchants you
with her glance.
And if you just take a peek at her,
you feel that “Jewish feeling” inside of you.

My Jewish girl, she is so pretty.
My Jewish girl, she has a certain Jewish charm.
Her golden hair, her teeth like pearls—
only a Jewish girl could be so beautiful.
A million dollars won’t help you find among other peoples
a girl with that Jewish charm.

froyen fil hob ikh gezon.
bay yedn folk zaynen zey farshidn.
nor keyne iz nit azoy sheyn
vi di froy bay di yidn.

a yidishe meydl, mit ir blik,
farkisheft bald in gantsn dikh.
un gibstu nor af ir a kuk,
fiistu a yidisn tam in zikh.

mayn yidishe meydle, zi iz azoy sheyn.
mayn yidishe meydle, mit ir yidishn kheyn.
fun gold ire herlek, di tseyner vi perelek
nor a yidishe meydl ken zayn azoy sheyn.
ir vet far milyonen, bay andere natsyonen,
nisht gefinen a meydl, mit a yidisn kheyn.
I recall now my little town:
Where I first glimpsed the light of day—
where I was born and where I grew up,
and how as a child I would go to school there.

Slutsk, oh Slutsk, my shtetl,¹ how I long for you.
Deep in my heart you lie, my home,
a cradle suspended on a string, and a broken bed,
yet you’re still dear to me,
Slutsk, oh Slutsk, my shtetl.

On Friday night Mother used to light the Sabbath candles.
Father would go to the synagogue
and return with Sabbath guests,
and they would sing beautiful table hymns.
Slutsk, oh Slutsk, my shtetl...

---

¹ A small market town of 500–10,000 people.
SAMET UN ZAYD
Composer: Herman Wohl  Lyrics: Louis Gilrod

A pretty, innocent girl from a poor family
blossoms like a pretty flower.
She gives herself to a wealthy man,
for she longs for glamour and grandeur.
The rich man buys her innocence for a velvet dress
and her love for a silk blouse.
He breaks her spirit
and satisfies his passions;
then he deserts her.

Velvet and silk cannot heal
the pain and suffering of tormented souls.
How terrible to sell virtue,
to lose one’s youth for velvet and silk.
What good are silks that bring suffering?
They utterly destroy innocence.
A cheap dress and a virtuous girl,
people admire more
than velvet and silk.

The ambulance is at the hospital
late at night
 carrying a girl elegantly adorned.
Her fate drove her to drink poison,
for a rich man had seduced her.
She was dressed in velvet and silk.
Her face, however, was as pale as chalk.
When the night glimpsed the break of day,
she was already dead—
falling prey to velvet and silk.
"Oh Hudl, Hudl, Hudl,
What's up with your strudel?
It's delicious; I really love it.
I don't need any meat or stew,
for I've had enough of them.
Oh Hudl, Hudl, serve the strudel.
Serve it."

I have a landsman named Dudl,
who has a wife named Hudl,
and Hudl-Dudl live together really well.
And Dudl's pretty wife Hudl
bakes an outstanding strudel.
What a great pleasure as it melts in your mouth.
Every Friday, when Dudl has a bit of time,
he comes home to his wife and he shouts:

"Oh Hudl, Hudl, Hudl ...
My landsman Dudl has a boarder,
who's in love with his Hudl,
for she cooks him a very good supper.
And the boarder, as should be,
delights in the supper,
and he truly devours Hudl with his eyes.
And when this Hudl serves the tea,
he smiles and says to her:

"Oh Hudl, Hudl, Hudl,
bring your strudel to the table.
It's delicious; I love it so much.
It's quite a delicacy,
as it goes down so smoothly.
Oh Hudl, Hudl, Hudl, give the strudel,
give it already!"

"oy, hudl, hudl, hudl,
vos hert zikh mitn shtrudl?
es iz geshmak, ikh hob es zeyer lib.
ikh darf keyn fleysh, keyn tsimes,
vayl ales iz mir nimes.
oy, hudl, hudl gib dem shtrudl,
gib!"

ikh hob a landsman, heyst er dudl.
hot er a vaybl, heyst zi hudl,
un hudl dudl lebn zikh gants voyl.
un zayn sheyne vaybl, hudl,
bakt dokh oysgtseykhnt shtrudl.
a mekhaye mamesh az tzugeyt es aykh in moyl.
yeder fraytik, ven dudl hot nor tsayt,
kunt er aheym tsum vaybl un er shrayt:

"oy, hudl, hudl, hudl...

a "boarder" hot mayn landsman dudl,
iz er farlibt gor in zayn hudl,
vayl zi kokht im "supper" zeyer fayn.
un der "boarder," vi geshikt zikh,
mit der supper er derkvikt zikh,
un er shlingt dokh hudln mamesh mit di oygn arayn.
un ven di hudl brengt tsum tish dem tey,
shmeykhlter er un zogt tsu ir azoy:

"oy, hudl, hudl, hudl,
tsum tish gib dayne shtrudl.
es iz geshmak, ikh hob es zeyer lib.
gvaid, ikh hob es lib,
es iz dokh gut a maykhl.
vayl es tzugeyt in baykhl.
oy, hudl, hudl, gib dem shtrudl, gib gib shoyn!"
Beneath the trees the grass grows,
Ay-lu-lu-lu-lu ... 
And the harsh winds blow.
Sleep, my little son.

Do not sit beside the window, my child,
for you can feel the draft there,
and I do not want you, my beautiful one,
to catch a cold, God forbid.

Dark clouds already fill the sky,
just as here in my heart.

Beneath the trees the grass grows...
Ay-lu-lu, ay-lu-lu ...
Sleep, my child, oh my heart.
Ay-lu-lu, ay-lu-lu ...
Stay healthy and be well.

unter beymer vaksn grozn,
ay-lu-lu-lu lu,
un di beyze vintn blozn,
shlof zshe, zunenyu.

zits, mayn kind, nit bay dem fentster,
vayl du kenst dem vint derfiln;
un ikh vil nit, du, mayn shenster,
zolst kholile zikh farkiln.

himi iz shoyn khmarne shvarts,
punkt azoy vi do bay mir in harts.

unter beymer vaksn grozn ...
ay-lu-lu, ay-lu-lu,
shlof zshe, mayn kind, oy, harts mayns.
ay-lu-lu, ay-lu-lu,
blayb mir gezunt.
IKH BIN FARLIBT
Composer: Alexander Olshanetsky  Lyrics: Jacob Jacobs

Fanitshke:
You evoke for me an idyllic scene,
I now have in my heart such a longing for home.
I long for those meadows there, with their green grass.
Oh, what I would give to gaze at them again.

Leybke:
How the ducks on their bellies would swim in the streams,
catch crumbs and not tire.
We both used to sit in the summer heat,
cuddled together, singing this song:

Both:
"I’m in love with a pretty, lovely, sweet little girl.
I’m in love, for you are really so refined.
Every smile and every glance of yours
bring my heart much happiness and joy.
I’m in love, I’m in love
with such a pretty girl."

Just tell me, my Fanitshke,
do you still remember how beautifully
the sun would reflect on the river when it set?
How a beautiful, sweet sound used to emanate from the woods?
That was a divine song from the birds.

Fanitshke:
dos, vos du dermonst mikh itst, iz a getlekh bild.
az ikh hob do in hartsn aza benkenish derfilt.
es benkt zikh nokh di lonkes dort mit dem grinem groz,
oy, vi volt ikh nokh a mol gevolt onkukn dos.

Leybke:
vi katshkes af di baykhlekh shvimen in di taykhlekh,
khapn brekelekh un vern gor nit mid.
mir flegn beyde zitsn zumer in di hitzn,
tsugetuliyet zingendik dos lid:

"ikh bin farlibt, in a kleyn sheyn, zis, lib, meydle,
ikh bin farlibt, vayl du bist dokh aza eydele.
dayn yeder shmeykhul un dayn yeder blik,
brengt mir in hartsn arayn fil freyd un glik.
ikh bin farlibt, ikh bin farlibt,
in aza sheyn meydle vi du."

zog mir nor, mayn fanitshke,
gedenkstu nokh vi sheyn,
vi di zun flegt zikh opshpigln afn taykh baym untergeyn?
fun velder flegt zikh hern nokh a sheyne ziser klang?
dos iz geven fun feygelkh a getlikher gezang.

Fanitshke:
di nakhtigal flegt treln un fun undz onkveln,
zigen tener zis gor on shier.
er flegt ful mit freydn, undz oyshern beydn,
un dan zingen punkt azoy vi mir.
SKRIP, KLEZMERL, SKRIPE
Composer: Sholom Secunda  Lyrics: Chaim Tauber

Oyftsutsien kinder, ot dos iz a vunder
fil mer vi geboyrn zayn aleyn.

Kh’vob dokh tog un nakht
mit keyn oyg nit tsugemakht,

Biz ikh hob derlebt dikh groys tsu zen.

Rearing children, now that is a wonder,
much more so than just giving birth.
Neither day nor night
did I rest my eyes,
until I lived to see you all grown up.

Now I will drink like a fish
and dance by the wedding canopy.
I say it plain and clear,
I will jump up onto the table
and celebrate wildly like the closest relation.

Fiddle, klezmer, scrape away.
Play a freylekh [cheerful tune] for the wedding.
The faces of all the
relatives are shining;
let’s go to the hupa [wedding canopy].

Drummer, strike the cymbals.
Fiddler, let the strings split.
Everyone is merry.
Just look at the bride.
She is so full of grace.
Oy, oy, more, livelier.
Make the circle bigger.

Oy, oy, bring the bride into the dance.
Oy, look at Aunt Leah;
she’s telling everyone what to do.
And Aunt Masha,
who doesn’t let herself be pushed around,
is pushing to the head of the table.
Mazel tov!

Oyvel trinken vi a fish,
un vel tantsn bay der khupe.

Kh’zog es yasne veyavne:
kh’vel shpringen afn tish
un komandeven vi a mekhutn a glavne.

Skrip klezmerl, skripe!
Shpil a freylekhs tsu der khupe
S’laykht a yeder ponem
Fun di mekhutonim.
Tsu der khupe lomir geyn

Klop, poyker in di tatsn
Fidler, zoln strunes platsn
Freylekhs zaynen ale
Kukt nor on di kale
Zi iz mole kheyen.
Oy, oy, shtarker, beser
Makht dos redl greser

Oy, oy, nempt arayn di kale in dem kon
Oy, kukt on di mume leya.
Zi zogt yedern a deya.
Un di mume mashe
Lozt nit shpayen in kashe.
Shtupt zikh oybn on
Mazltov!