

YIKHES (PEDIGREE)

Music: traditional

Lyrics: traditional/Alpert

Reimagined for Kleznorth 2021

English translation: Alpert/Tomlinson

Accent marks show where the stress fall on the word

Vos-zhe bistu, kétésele, broyges,
Vos geystu arópgelozt di noz?
Oy, tomer vilstu visn dayn yikhes,
Vel ikh dir zogn ver un vos ...

Dayn tate iz a shmarovóznik,
dayn mame gánvet fish in mark,
un dayn bruder iz a kartyózhnik,
un dayn shvester geyt mit a kozák

Dayn feter iz geshtánen af di rogn,
dayn mume hot álemen in bod
Dayn zeyde halt zikh nor in klogn,
un dayn bobé dreyt zikh gut in rod

Dayn miníster iz an óligarkh, a gróyser
Zayn kháver iz Putins bester fraynt
Zayn khevre lebt in a velt fun moyser –
Fun zey ale lomir poter vern haynt!

Why are you so angry, my kitten?
Why is your nose turned down?
In case you'd like to know your pedigree
I can tell you the who-and-what...

Your father greases the wheels
Your mother steals fish at the market
And your brother is a card-sharp
And your sister is going with a Cossack

Your uncle hung around streetcorners
Your aunt says to hell with everyone
Your grandpa does nothing but curse
And your grandma knows how to work the
system

Your minister is a big oligarch
His buddy is Putin's best friend
His crowd lives in luxury and excess
Let's be rid of them all today!

Yikhes, AKA *Dem ganefs yikhes* (The gangster's pedigree) is a classic Yiddish popular put-down song and klezmer bulgar tune evoking poverty and the Jewish underworld of cities like Odessa, Warsaw, Kiev and others at the turn of the 20th century. Reshaped a bit by Michael Alpert to reflect the contemporary avatar of that legacy, on a far greater, global level.