

OF DI GRINE FELDER, VELDER – ON THE GREEN FIELDS AND WOODS

Of di grine, felder velder, vey, vey
Of di grine, felder velder,
ligt mit koyln badekt a zelner, vey, vey,
ligt mit koyln badekt a zelner, vey, vey.

Kimt tse flien a shvartser foygl, vey, vey
kimt tse flien a shvartser foygl,
dzhivet oys bay im di oygn, vey, vey (repeat)

Sheyner foygl, shvartse vorone vey, vey
Sheyner foygl, shvartse vorone,
Fli avek tsi mayn mame, vey vey (repeat)

Zolst ir fin mayn toyt nisht zugn, vey, vey,
zolst ir fin mayn toyt nisht zugn,
anit vet zi nit oyfhern klugn vey, vey (repeat)

Nor ver vet nukh mir veynen in klugn vey, vey
ver vet nukh mir veynen in klugn,
ver vet nukh mir kadish zugn? vey, vey (repeat)

Nor dus ferdl, dus getraye, vey, vey
nor dus ferdl dus getraye
vet nukhgeyn nukh mayn levaye, vey, vey (repeat)

On the green fields and woods a soldier lies, covered with bullets – woe, oh woe.
A black bird comes flying and pecks his eyes out.
Beautiful bird, black crow, fly away to my mother
But don't tell her of my death, or she'll never cease to weep and mourn
Who will weep and lament for me, who will say Kaddish for me?
Only my faithful horse will follow my funeral – woe, oh woe.

A Yiddish recruit/soldiers' ballad from the Austro-Hungarian/Russian front in World War I. Variants in Yiddish exist from all sides of that terrible conflict. Both words and music are very close to the 19th-century (at least) Ukrainian song "Chorna Rillya" (The Black Furrows). The text is distantly related to the Scottish ballad 'The Twa Corbies' and similar ballads from the Atlantic Isles and throughout Europe. I learned this version from Beyle Schaechter-Gottesman, Dr. Jonas Gottesman and Itsik Gottesman, of Ukraine (Czernowitz/Chernivtsi) and the Bronx. – Transcription and translation by Michael Alpert, 1999.