

Triangle Fire Song

Washington Square, 1911
Saturday, March 25
At the Triangle Shirtwaist Factory
Tillie Kupersmith
Is trapped in a fire in the ten-story Ash Building
When a bundle of cloth tumbles down—
“Harris is saving his best material”—
Thought a witness till she hit the ground.

Chorus: Whoever said, *the dead tell no tales*
Was either a fool or a liar
‘Cause they’ve been speaking for a hundred years:
Remember the Triangle Fire.

From the *shtetl* to the sweatshop
She survived with her needle and thread
She poured her grief into the *Bintel Brief*
The union was her butter and bread—
She kisses her sweetheart—their last act of love
On the Sabbath they have to work—
They jump from the window nine stories above
The sidewalks of New York. (Ch.)

A makeshift morgue on Charities Pier
The workers call Misery Lane
With bitter tears the families appear
To identify their loved ones remains
The coffins are open—they can’t be sure--
Their features are all but erased
A lock of hair, a shoe from the flames
Take years for some names to be traced. (Ch.)

“The Shirtwaist Kings” are tried for manslaughter
Isaac Harris and Max Blanck
A jury of their peers finds them *Not Guilty*
The Statue of Liberty shrank
They award the families \$75
Apiece for their children who died
Give me your tired, your poor huddled masses
When your building burns lock them inside.

A hundred and forty six immigrant garment workers
Martyred in eighteen minutes
Yet no one’s to blame for this wall of flame
If there’s a Hall of Shame they’re in it
Skeletons were bending over sewing machines
Where Margaret Schwartz drew her last breath
Fire escape broke—she choked on the smoke--
In the Triangle factory of death. (Final Ch.)

