

I'm Gonna Be An Engineer

Peggy Seeger

I'M GONNA BE AN ENGINEER

When I was a little girl I wished I was a boy
I tagged along behind the gang and wore my corduroys.
Everybody said I only did it to annoy
But I was gonna be an engineer

Mamma said, "Why can't you be a lady?
Your duty is to make me the mother of a pearl
Wait until you're older, dear
And maybe you'll be glad that you're a girl.

Dainty as a Dresden statue, gentle as a Jersey cow,
Smooth as silk, gives cream and milk
Learn to coo, learn to moo
That's what you do to be a lady, now.

When I went to school I learned to write and how to read
History, geography and home economy
And typing is a skill that every girl is sure to need
To while away the extra time until the time to breed
And then they had the nerve to ask, what would I like to be?
I says, "I'm gonna be an engineer!"

"No, you only need to learn to be a lady
The duty isn't yours, for to try to run the world
An engineer could never have a baby
Remember, dear, that you're a girl"

She's smart --- for a woman.
I wonder how she got that way?
You get no choice, you get no voice
Just stay mum, pretend you're dumb.
That's how you come to be a lady, today.

Well, I started as a typist but I studied on the sly
Working out the day and night so I could qualify
And every time the boss came in, he pinched me on the thigh
Said, "I've never had an engineer!"

"You owe it to the job to be a lady
The duty of the staff is to give the boss a whirl
The wages that you get are crummy, maybe
But it's all you get, 'cause you're a girl"

Then Jimmy came along and we set up a conjugation
We were busy every night with loving recreation
I spent my days at work so he could get an education
And now he's an engineer!

He said: "I know you'll always be a lady
The duty of my darling is to love me all her life
Could an engineer look after or obey me?
Remember, dear, that you're my wife!"

As soon as Jimmy got a job, I studied hard again
Then busy at me turret-lathe a year or two, and then
The morning that the twins were born, Jimmy says to them

"Your mother was an engineer!"

"You owe it to the kids to be a lady
Dainty as a dish-rag, faithful as a chow
Stay at home, you got to mind the baby
Remember you're a mother now!"

Every time I turn around there's something else to do
Cook a meal or mend a sock or sweep a floor or two
Listening to Jimmy Young - it makes me want to spew
I was gonna be an engineer.

I only wish that I could be a lady
I'd do the lovely things that a lady's s'posed to do
I wouldn't even mind if only they would pay me
Then I could be a person too.

What price for a woman?
You can buy her for a ring of gold,
To love and obey, without any pay,
You get a cook and a nurse for better or worse
You don't need a purse when a lady is sold.

Oh, but now the times are harder and me Jimmy's got the sack;
I went down to Vicker's, they were glad o have me back.
But I'm a third-class citizen, my wages tell me that
But I'm a first-class engineer!

The boss he says "We pay you as a lady,
You only got the job because I can't afford a man,
With you I keep the profits high as may be,
You're just a cheaper pair of hands."

You got one fault, you're a woman;
You're not worth the equal pay.
A bitch or a tart, you're nothing but heart,
Shallow and vain, you've got no brain,

Well, I listened to my mother and I joined a typing pool
Listened to my lover and I put him through his school
If I listen to the boss, I'm just a bloody fool
And an underpaid engineer
I been a sucker ever since I was a baby
As a daughter, as a mother, as a lover, as a dear
But I'll fight them as a woman, not a lady
I'll fight them as an engineer!

Words and music by Peggy Seeger in 1970
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