

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 a 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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the Present Moment

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