

I'm Gonna Be an Engineer

by Peggy Seeger (1976)

G *C*(¹/₄) *G*(³/₄)
When I was a little girl, I wished I was a boy
G *C*(¹/₄) *D*(³/₄)
I tagged along behind the gang and wore my corduroys
G *C*(¹/₄) *G*(³/₄)
Everybody said I only did it to annoy
A7 *D7*
But I was gonna be an engineer.

G *A*(¹/₂) *B*(¹/₂)
Momma told me, Can't you be a lady?
C(¹/₂) *G*(¹/₂) *Am*(¹/₂) *D7*(¹/₂)
Your duty is to make me the mother of a pearl
G *B7*(¹/₂) *C7*(¹/₂)
Wait until you're older, dear, and may be
G(¹/₂) *D7*(¹/₂) *G*
You'll be glad that you're a girl

Em(¹/₂) *Bm*(¹/₂) *Em*
Dainty as a Dresden statue
Em *Bm*
Gentle as a Jersey cow
Cm *G*
Smooth as silk, gives creamy milk
C *G*
Learn to coo, learn to moo
Bm *Bm*(¹/₂) *Am*(¹/₂) *D7*
That's what you do to be a lady now

When I went to school I learned to write and how to read
Some 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 say, What would you 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 and run the world
An engineer could never have a baby
Remember, dear, that you're a girl

So I become a typist and I study on the sly
Working out the day and night so I can qualify
And every time the boss come in he pinched me on the thigh
Says, I've never had an engineer

You owe it to the job to be a lady
It's the duty of the staff for to give the boss a whirl
The wages that you get are crummy, maybe
But it's all you get cos' 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

Then Jimmy come along and we set up a conjugation
We were busy every night with loving recreation
I spent my day at work so he could get his education
And now he's an engineer
He says, I know you'll always be a lady
It's the duty of my darling to love me all her life
How could an engineer look after or obey me
Remember, dear, that you're my wife

As soon as Jimmy got a job I began again
Then, happy at my turret-lathe a year or so, and then
The morning that the twins were born, Jimmy says to them
Kids, 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've got to mind the baby
Remember you're a mother now

Every time I turn around there's something else to do
It's cook a meal or mend a sock or sweep a floor or two
I listen in to Jimmy Young, it makes me want to spew
I was gonna be an engineer
Now I really wish that I could be a lady
I could do the lovely things that a lady's s'posed to do
I wouldn't nearly mind if only they would pay me
And 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
No you don't need a purse when a lady is sold

But now that times are harder, and my Jimmy's got the sack
I went down to Vickers, they were glad to have me back
But I'm a third-class citizen, my wages tell me that
And I'm a first-class engineer
The boss he says, We pay you as a lady
You only got the job cos' 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've 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 got no brain
You even go down the drain like a lady today

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