

A Rustic Wooing

By

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Adapted by myf

original script owned by Elaine Dunn

Cast of Characters

- MOTHER: Ordinary, long black skirt, mob cap and 'urden apron
- GRAN: Old, cantankerous, slightly deaf, and shouts. Long black skirt, shawl, cap and white crepe hair. Walking stick
- SARAH: Mutton dressed as lamb. Gingham dress, very full, sticking out over a stiff petticoat, and showing frilled drawers, sun bonnet, plaits or ringlets made of crepe hair, tied with large bows, and a large sash tied in a bow at the back
- 'ENERY: Rreally rustic, and very simple. Smock, cord trousers tied round the knee with bag string, flat cap, or shapeless felt hat, straw in mouth

Card table, with tablecloth. Pile of washing on it, which Mother is folding. Alternatively, a few cups and saucers, whichever is easiest. Chair to right of stage for Gran and two chairs put together at left of stage, and marked 'sofa' for Sarah and 'Enery.

All cast should use strong rustic accent if possible.

CURTAIN OPENS. SARAH TO LEFT OF STAGE, SIMPERING, AND SMOOTHING HER DRESS, AND RINGLETS. MOTHER HELPING GRAN, WHO IS BENT, AND LEANING ON HER STICK, TO HER CHAIR TO RIGHT OF STAGE.

MOTHER

Come on then, Gran. Up with yer.

GRAN

Don't yer shout at me, my gal. Yer'll be old one day yerself, don't ferget.

(With much helping and puffing they eventually get her into her chair)

GRAN (cont'd)

(Banging her stick on the floor)

Where's me milk stout. I ain't 'ad me milk stout yet, and yer know what the Doctor said.

MOTHER

Oh, alright, alright. I'll get it yer in a minute.

(Catches sight of Sarah)

Oh there you are, Sarah me dearie. Why 'ow pretty you do be looking. Don't 'er look pretty Gran.

GRAN

Oh 'aar. If a bag of pig muck tied round with a bit of bag string looks pretty, 'er do.

SARAH

(Wails)

Oh Mother - She always do spoil everything so, our Gran do.

MOTHER

There now, my little dear. Don't 'ee take on so. Do take no notice of Gran. When 'Enery sees you tonight, he'll be fair flummoxed, you'll see. You'll get 'im alright ternight, and that's a fact.

GRAN

'Er'll never get 'im. Nor nobody else. 'Er's been in the shop winder too long, 'er has. And in my opinion, nobody 'er age should ought to be prettied up with ribbons and bows - unless it be our old sow when 'er's got to be took, and 'er's a sight more useful than our Sarah.

(Sarah throws her skirt over her head,
and wails)

MOTHER

Now Gran, that's enough. That'll do of that, I say. If I 'as any more trouble with you, you'll stay in your bed with nothing but gruel for a week. See 'ow you like that. And if you're so fond of our old sow, I wonder you don't go down and live with 'er. They do say birds of a feather...

GRAN

'Ow could yer. 'Ow could yer. Call your poor old white haired Mother and old sow. And I told yer once ternight, I ain't 'ad me milk stout.

MOTHER

(Trying to pacify Sarah, who is still wailing with her face covered up, and her shoulders shaking)

Oh alright. I tell yer I'll get it for yer in a minute. I only got one pair of 'ands ain't I.

SARAH

(Stops sobbing)

Mother, when 'Enery comes ternight, will yer take our Gran out somewhere, and make her leave us alone fer a bit.

GRAN

Leave yer alone - leave yer alone. I wouldn't touch yer, and neither will he it 'e's got any sense, but as 'e is a foreigner from over the border by (put in name of local village) I can't answer for his family tree. There just ain't no knowin' what them folks from (village) 'ull do.

MOTHER

(Exasperated)

Now Gran, shut up a minnit. Sarah, my dear. If 'Enery don't come up to scratch ternight, yer'll just 'ave ter take to good works and make out as yer don't care. 'E do be your larst chance.

(Mother re-ties Sarah's sash, and a knock is heard at the door)

(Goes off stage, and returns with 'Enery)

Why, what a luvly surprise, Sarah. 'Ere do be 'Enery come all this way to see us. 'Ow kind. Lucky you made some of that dead fly pie you're so good at.

(Sarah simpers, and looks bashful)

GRAN

Lucky. Oh yes, it was lucky. Lucky it weren't burnt black as a cinder, same as usual.

MOTHER

(Giving Gran a thump to shut her up)
Do sit down 'Enery. You'll have to excuse Gran and me. We've got some work to do outside.

(Gran looks startled, and Mother tries to persuade her to stand up)

(Coyly)

Now I know as you young people won't mind being left alone.

(Sarah giggles. 'Enery blushes)

SARAH

(Sitting down on sofa, and patting the seat beside her)

Sit down 'Enery do. Why I do believe you be a blushing. I can't believe you've never sat in a sofa with a young lady afore.

GRAN

(Pushing Mother away)

I aint getting up, I'm a staying where I am. Young Lady!

(Snorts)

SARAH

Come a bit closer 'Enery do. Don't be shy 'Enery.

GRAN

(Pushing away Mother's helping hand)

Shy. Shy. Anybody'd shy at the sight of 'er. And I shan't tell yer again. Where's me stout.

SARAH

Do 'ee have a bit of money then 'Enery. Enough say just for a little cottage, big enough for two, and perhaps a few 'ens.

('Enery shuffles his feet in overlarge boots, and acts bashful)

GRAN

'Ens. 'Ens. 'Er won't be satisfied with a few 'ens.

SARAH

(Leaning on 'Enery)

Oh 'Enery. Don't 'ee get lonely sometimes.

('Enery shakes his head)

SARAH

Oh 'Enery, don't 'ee sometimes feel like - well getting wed like.

GRAN

(Scandalised)

'Er's shameless, er is. Getting wed. And 'ens.

SARAH

(Giving Gran a poisonous look)
 Mother, take our Gran out, and give 'er 'er milk stout.

GRAN

I'm stopping where I'm at. I'll 'ave me stout 'ere.

SARAH

Oh 'Enery, just us two. We'd be ever so cosy and warm of a winter's night. There do be a moon ternight, 'Enery. Shall us go and look at it.

GRAN

(Poking 'Enery vigorously with her stick)
 Look at the moon. Yer'd better just mind 'er don't bray at it.

MOTHER

(Making another attempt to shift Gran)
 You'd better just mind what I said before about gruel.

SARAH

(Taking 'Enery's hand)
 Oh, 'Enery, I do think 'ee be 'andsome like. I do like a well set up figger of a man, especially if 'e's 'as 'air as well. Why 'Enery, what big 'ands and feet 'ee have got.

GRAN

'Er talks as if 'e were a prize bull, but 'ers no heifer.

MOTHER

(Warningly)
 Gruel. Gruel.

SARAH

'Enery. Don't 'e think I be pretty. Father always used ter say as I was pretty.

GRAN

(Poking with her stick)
 He was another liar, and 'e has been dead nigh on twenty years. Things change.

SARAH

(Desperately)
 It 'as been said as my 'air is like corn.

GRAN

I think 'er means straw.

SARAH

Don't 'e think I got small feet 'Enery. I do think as a female woman ought ter 'ave small feet.

GRAN

'Er only takes size eight when er's got her thin socks on.

(Business with Mother and Gran)

SARAH

'Enery. Yer don't 'ave ter take no notice of Gran. 'Er's old. 'Er'll be gone soon.

GRAN

Be gone soon, will I. I aint going nowhere. I'm stopping 'ere, and I'll outlast you, my gal.

SARAH

I be a very careful manager, 'Enery.

GRAN

Oh yes. 'Er manages ter get the lion's share of everything that's going, 'er do.

SARAH

(In absolute desperation)

Oh 'Enery. We could 'ave such times together, you and me. Wouldn't 'ee like to wed with I, 'Enery.

'ENERY

(Speaking for the first time)

(Takes the straw out of his mouth)

Well, I would really Sarah, but I do be 'andicapped like.

SARAH

(Jumping up and looking at him)

Why. What's wrong with yer. Yer looks alright ter me. Whatever do 'ee mean.

'ENERY

(Taking centre stage)

Well, yer see. It's like this. My wife only lets me come out on a Saturday.

CURTAIN