

Grandfather's Old Ram

Written by

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Adapted from the Novel

Roughing It

By

Mark Twain

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Initial draft

FADE IN

EXT. IMPROVISED BAR---NIGHT

The bar is literally just a plank with a bottle, at some otherwise totally indeterminate location, with Mark TWAIN and a BOY standing by it--Boy is an adult miner, but is definitely One Of The Boys.

BOY

I'm telling you, you have to have Jim Blaine tell you about his Grandfather's old ram.

TWAIN

You keep telling me that, and I've been looking out for him, but then you keep telling me he's not correctly drunk!

BOY

Oh, yeah, yeah, you have to have him just satisfactorily drunk. Just moderately drunk ain't going to do it.

FADE OUT

FADE IN

INT. JIM BLAINE'S CABIN---NIGHT

The room is ringed with bunk beds, several assorted kegs, candle boxes, and a pine table. The Boys are seated in several spots throughout the room, some on beds, some on individual barrels, boxes. On the table is a bottle with a lit candle stuck in the top, which provides the dim light for the room.

Jim BLAINE is sitting on a powder keg near the table, one hand held up, a clay pipe in the other. He has a round face, regular length dark hair, is dressed in a shirt, pants, boots.

Twain slips in the cabin door, with the Boy.

BOY

Shhh! Don't speak-he's going to commence.

Twain spots an unclaimed box and has a seat. Blain lowers his hand. The Boy finds himself a seat.

BLAINE

I don't reckon them times will ever come again. There never was a more bullier old ram than what he was.

Blaine's face wrinkles, a graying beard matches his gray hair, he's wearing a coat, and has become his GRANDFATHER.

GRANDFATHER

Grandfather fetched him from Illinois-got him of a man by the name of Yates---

Blaine becomes Bill YATES.

YATES

Bill Yates-maybe you might have heard of him; his father

Then Blaine shifts to be THANKFUL Yates.

THANKFUL

was a deacon-Baptist-and he was a rustler, too; a man had to get up ruther early to get the start of old Thankful Yates; it was him that put

SETH Green and a brother are both trying to sit on the same barrel.

SETH

the Greens up to jining teams with my grandfather when he moved west. Seth Green

And the brother falls off and vanishes.

SETH (cont'd)

was prob'ly the pick of the flock; he married

Sarah WILKERSON is sitting on the barrel and holding up another barrel as she looks about.

WILKERSON

a Wilkerson-Sarah Wilkerson-good  
cretur, she was-one of the likeliest  
heifers that was ever raised in old  
Stoddard, everybody said that knowed  
her. She could heft a bar'l of flour

As she puts the barrel down, it shrinks to become a drop  
spindle hanging from a thread that extends from a clump of  
wool in one hand.

WILKERSON (cont'd)

as easy as I can flirt a flapjack.  
And spin? Don't mention it!  
Independent? Humph! When

Sile HAWKINS drops the wool and it vanishes along with the  
spindle.

HAWKINS

Sile Hawkins come a browsing around  
her, she let him know that for all  
his tin he couldn't trot in harness  
alongside of her. You see, Sile  
Hawkins was-no, it warn't Sile  
Hawkins, after all-it was a galoot by  
the name of

FILKINS wobbles as he holds a bottle and waves it around.

FILKINS

Filkins-I disremember his first name;  
but he was a stump-come into pra'r  
meeting drunk, one night,

Richard Milhous Nixon has his arms up in a Y as his fingers  
on each hand flash a paired V for Victory.

NIXON

hooraying for Nixon, becuz he thought  
it was a primary; and old

Old deacon FERGUSON knocks imagined dirt of his hands.

FERGUSON

deacon Ferguson up and scooted him  
through the window and he lit on old

Miss JEFFERSON flinches and ducks, putting her hands up over  
her gray hair.

JEFFERSON

Miss Jefferson's head, poor old  
filly. She was a good soul-

When Miss Jefferson straightens up she's missing one eye, the other is hazel.

JEFFERSON (cont'd)  
had a glass eye and used to lend it  
to old

Miss WAGNER has one bright blue eye and one yellow eye that's a different diameter, and has an explosion of curly brown hair, and white eyebrows. She is wearing a blue dress that is the color of her eye.

WAGNER  
Miss Wagner, that hadn't any, to  
receive company in; it warn't big  
enough, and when Miss Wagner

As Miss Wagner's blue eye stares straight ahead, the borrowed eye starts to turn and stare in a different direction.

WAGNER (cont'd)  
warn't noticing, it would get twisted  
around in the socket, and look up,  
maybe, or out to one side, and every  
which way, while t' other one was  
looking as straight ahead as a spy-  
glass.

Jim Blaine is sitting on a barrel.

BLAINE  
Grown people didn't mind it, but it  
most always made

A seven year old girl and a nine year old boy are perched on the barrel with an ELEVEN year old boy standing behind them. The eleven year old looks alarmed, the nine year old looks very disturbed, and the seven year old has just burst into tears.

ELEVEN  
the children cry, it was so sort of  
scary. She tried

Miss Wagner has her hands in front of the empty socket and then lowers them to show the yellow eye ringed with cotton.

WAGNER  
packing it in raw cotton, but it  
wouldn't work,

Miss Wagner keeps staring forward as the cotton also shifts about and starts coming out of the socket.

WAGNER (cont'd)  
 somehow-the cotton would get loose  
 and stick out and look so kind of  
 awful that

The eleven year old crouches so that his head is even with  
 and between the heads of the seven and nine year olds, as  
 the eleven year old covers his ears with his hands, as the  
 seven year old covers her eyes with her hands, as the nine  
 year old covers his mouth with his hands.

ELEVEN  
 the children couldn't stand it no  
 way.

Miss Wagner now has one blue eye and an empty socket, and  
 just stares about the room.

WAGNER  
 She was always dropping it out, and  
 turning up her old dead-light on the  
 company empty, and making them  
 oncomfortable, becuz she never could  
 tell when it hopped out, being blind  
 on that side, you see.

Jim Blaine is carefully trying to hint something.

BLAINE  
 So somebody would have to hunch her  
 and say, "Your game eye has fetched  
 loose, Miss Wagner dear"

Miss Wagner suddenly looks about and then has the eyeball  
 and gets it shoved back into the socket . . .

WAGNER  
 -and then all of them would have to  
 sit and wait till she jammed it in  
 again-wrong side before,

. . . only now the eyeball is green.

WAGNER (cont'd)  
 as a general thing, and green as a  
 bird's egg, being a bashful cretur

Miss Wagner is sitting on a barrel in a cabin full of gold  
 miners . . .

WAGNER (cont'd)  
 and easy sot back before company.

And stares out at everyone with one green eye and one blue eye.

WAGNER (cont'd)

But being wrong side before warn't much difference, anyway; becuz her own eye was sky-blue and the glass one was yaller on the front side,

Miss Wagner looks around the room while she is sitting on a barrel in a cabin full of gold miners . . .

WAGNER (cont'd)

so whichever way she turned it it didn't match nohow. Old Miss Wagner was considerable on the borrow, she was.

Miss Wagner, in her bright blue dress, is sitting on a barrel in a cabin full of women who all are sitting in the same places that the miners were sitting, and have the exact same faces as the miners, including the bearded miners . . .

WAGNER (cont'd)

When she had a quilting, or Dorcas S'iety at her house she gen'ally

Below the hem of Miss HIGGINS's bright yellow dress is a boot, and next to the boot a length of peg.

HIGGINS

borrowed Miss Higgins's wooden leg to stump around on;

Below the hem of Miss Wagner's bright blue dress is a boot, and next to the boot a length of peg is dangling, the end of the peg is at least five or so inches off the ground.

WAGNER

it was considerable shorter than her other pin, but much she minded that. She said she couldn't abide crutches when she had company, becuz they were so slow; said when she

Miss Wagner, in her bright blue dress, is sitting on a barrel in a cabin full of women who all are sitting in the same places that The Boys were sitting, and have the exact same faces as The Boys, including those miners with beards . . .

WAGNER (cont'd)  
 had company and things had to be  
 done, she wanted to get up and hump  
 herself.

Miss Wagner has an explosion of curly brown hair, and white  
 eyebrows.

WAGNER (cont'd)  
 She was as bald as a jug, and so she  
 used to borrow

MISS JACOBS has an explosion of curly brown hair, and black  
 eyebrows.

MISS JACOBS  
 Miss Jacobs's wig-Miss Jacobs was the  
 coffin-peddler's wife-

JACOBS  
 a ratty old buzzard, he was, that  
 used to go roosting around where  
 people was sick, waiting for 'em; and  
 there that old rip would

In the cabin, Jacobs is sitting on a full length pine coffin  
 in front of the table with the candle in the bottle.

JACOBS (cont'd)  
 sit all day, in the shade, on a  
 coffin that he judged would fit the  
 can'idate; and if it was a slow  
 customer and kind of uncertain,

Jacobs is lying in the coffin with a blanket.

JACOBS (cont'd)  
 he'd fetch his rations and a blanket  
 along and sleep in the coffin nights.  
 He was anchored out that way,

The coffin is lying in three inches of snow.

JACOBS (cont'd)  
 in frosty weather, for about three  
 weeks, once, before old

ROBBINS is sitting on the barrel.



ROBBINS

Robbins's place, waiting for him; and after that, for as much as two years, Jacops was not on speaking terms with the old man, on account of his disapp'inting him. He got one of his feet froze, and lost money, too, becuz old Robbins took a favorable turn and got well. The next time Robbins got sick,

In the cabin, Jacops is sitting on a full length varnished pine coffin in front of the table with the candle in the bottle.

JACOPS

Jacops tried to make up with him, and varnished up the same old coffin and fetched it along; but

Robbins is lying in the coffin.

ROBBINS

old Robbins was too many for him; he had him in, and 'peared to be powerful weak; he bought the coffin for ten dollars

Jacops is sitting on a barrel.

JACOPS

and Jacops was to pay it back and twenty-five more besides if Robbins didn't like the coffin after he'd tried it.

Robbins is lying in the coffin, in a shroud, eyes closed.

ROBBINS

And then Robbins died, and at the funeral he

Robbins sits up, ripping his way out of the shroud.

ROBBINS (cont'd)

bursted off the lid and riz up in his shroud and told

The PARSON is sitting on a barrel.

PARSON  
 the parson to let up on the  
 performances, becuz he could not  
 stand

Robbins climbs out of the coffin, puts the lid back and sits  
 on it.

ROBBINS  
 such a coffin as that. You see he had  
 been in a trance once before, when he  
 was young, and he took the chances on  
 another, cal'lating that if he made  
 the trip it was money in his pocket,  
 and if he missed fire he couldn't  
 lose a cent.

Jacops is sitting on a barrel and looks rather pissed off.

JACOPS  
 And by George he sued Jacops for the  
 rhino and got jedgment;

Robbins is sitting on the coffin.

ROBBINS  
 and he set up the coffin in his back  
 parlor and said he 'lowed to take his  
 time, now. It was always an

Jacops is sitting on a barrel and looks rather pissed off.

JACOPS  
 aggravation to Jacops, the way that  
 miserable old thing acted. He moved  
 back to Indiany pretty soon-went to  
 Wellsville-Wellsville was the place

SQUIRE Hogadorn has a bottle and takes a drink.

SQUIRE  
 (glugging, as needed)  
 the Hogadorns was from. Mighty fine  
 family. Old Maryland stock. Old  
 Squire Hogadorn could carry around  
 more mixed licker, and cuss better  
 than most any man I ever see. His

Becky MARTIN puts the bottle down.

MARTIN  
 second wife was the widder  
 Billings-she that was Becky Martin;

Mrs. DUNLAP

DUNLAP  
her dam was

DEACON

DEACON  
deacon Dunlap's first wife. Her

MARIA is sitting on the barrel, . . .

MARIA  
oldest child, Maria, married a  
missionary

. . . and then gets lit up by a light from above.

MARIA (cont'd)  
and died in grace-et up by the  
savages.

David LIVINGSTONE is sitting in a large cauldron. Behind him are Mel Brooks and Sid Caesar. Brooks and Caesar have no makeup on, and are bare chested. Brooks is wearing a Plains Indian feathered headdress, Caesar has his hair in a topknot with a thigh bone through it.

LIVINGSTONE  
They et him, too, poor feller-biled  
him. It warn't the custom, so they  
say, but they explained to

Graham CHAPMAN, John CLEESE, Terry GILLIAM, Eric IDLE, Terry JONES, and Michael PALIN are all wearing pith helmets, are arranged to one side and behind the caldron, are staring into the empty cauldron, as Brooks and Caesar are on the other side of the cauldron and gesturing at it.

CHAPMAN  
friends of his'n that went down there

CLEESE  
to bring away his things, that they'd  
tried missionaries

GILLIAM  
every other way and never could get  
any good out of 'em-

IDLE  
and so it annoyed all his relations  
to find out that

JONES  
that man's life was fooled away

PALIN  
just out of a dern'd experiment, so  
to speak.

Jim Blaine is sitting on a barrel.

BLAINE  
But mind you, there ain't anything  
ever reely lost; everything that  
people can't understand and don't see  
the reason of does good if you only  
hold on and give it a fair shake;

The Terry Gilliam GOD is peering out of a sea of clouds.

GOD  
Prov'dence don't fire no blank  
ca'tridges, boys. That there  
missionary's substance, unbeknowns to  
himself,

Livingstone is sitting in his caldron, and is now lit from  
above. Brooks and Caesar are behind him and are now  
dressed as orthodox rabbis.

LIVINGSTONE  
actu'ly converted every last one of  
them heathens that took a chance at  
the barbacue. Nothing ever fetched  
them but that. Don't tell me it was  
an accident that he was biled. There  
ain't no such a thing as an accident.

Uncle LEM is sitting on a barrel, leaning against  
scaffolding.

LEM  
When my uncle Lem was leaning up agin  
a scaffolding once, sick, or drunk,  
or suthin,

An IRISHMAN is sitting on a barrel as a cascade of bricks  
fall around him.

IRISHMAN  
an Irishman with a hod full of bricks  
fell on him out of the third story  
and broke the

Uncle Lem is sitting on the barrel, wrapped in bandages.

LEM

old man's back in two places. People said it was an accident. Much accident there was about that. He didn't know what he was there for, but he was there for a good object. If he hadn't been there

The Irishman is sitting on the barrel

IRISHMAN

the Irishman would have been killed. Nobody can ever make me believe anything different from that.

Uncle Lem's DOG is sitting on the barrel.

DOG

Uncle Lem's dog was there. Why didn't the Irishman fall on the dog? Becuz the dog would a seen him a coming and stood from under. That's the reason the dog warn't appinted. A dog can't be depended on to carry out a special providence. Mark my words it was a put-up thing. Accidents don't happen, boys. Uncle Lem's dog-I wish you could a seen that dog. He was

Some stereotypical version of a middle eastern SHEPHERD is sitting on the barrel.

SHEPHERD

a reglar shepherd-or ruther he was

A BULL dressed as some stereotypical version of a middle eastern shepherd is sitting on the barrel. The barrel splinters under the weight of the bull.

BULL

part bull and part shepherd-splendid animal; belonged

Parson HAGAR, who is standing, looks around and then grabs a barrel to sit on . . .

HAGAR

to parson Hagar before . . .

. . as Lem starts to sit back down again on the barrel, . .

LEM

Uncle Lem got him.

. . and Hagar sits on the barrel.

HAGAR

Parson Hagar belonged to the Western  
Reserve Hagars; prime family;

Hagar's MOTHER shifts about on the barrel.

MOTHER

his mother was a Watson; one of

Hagar's SISTER is sitting on the barrel.

SISTER

his sisters married

William WHEELER is sitting on the barrel.

WHEELER

a Wheeler; they settled in Morgan  
county, and he got nipped by the  
machinery in a carpet factory and  
went through in less than a quarter  
of a minute;

The sister is sitting on the barrel with an unrolled clump  
of carpet standing upright next to her.

SISTER

his widder bought the piece of carpet  
that had his remains wove in,

Several rows of arena seating pews are parked in front of  
the table. Sitting in the pews, from front pew to back, are  
PEOPLE: Boy, Grandfather, Yates, Thankful, Seth, Wilkerson,  
Hawkins, Filkins, Nixon, Ferguson, Jefferson, Wagner,  
Eleven, Higgins, Miss Jacops, Jacops, Robbins, Parson,  
Squire, Martin, Dunlap, Deacon, Maria, Livingstone, four  
Friends, God, Lem, Irishman, Shepherd, Bull, and Hagar's  
mother.

PEOPLE

(very much in chorus)  
and people come a hundred mile to  
'tend the funeral. There was fourteen  
yards in the piece.

The sister is sitting on the barrel with an unrolled clump  
of carpet standing upright next to her.

SISTER

She wouldn't let them roll him up,  
but planted him just so-full length.  
The church was middling small where

Several rows of arena seating pews are parked in front of the table. Sitting in the pews, from front pew to back, are PEOPLE: Boy, Grandfather, Yates, Thankful, Seth, Wilkerson, Hawkins, Filkins, Nixon, Ferguson, Jefferson, Wagner, Eleven, Higgins, Miss Jacops, Jacops, Robbins, Parson, Squire, Martin, Dunlap, Deacon, Maria, Livingstone, four Friends, God, Lem, Irishman, Shepherd, Bull, and Hagar's mother.

PEOPLE

(very much in chorus)

they preached the funeral, and they  
had to let one end of the coffin  
stick out of the window. They didn't  
bury him—they planted one end, and  
let him stand up, same as a monument.

Jim Blaine is sitting on a barrel, blinking . . .

BLAINE

And they nailed a sign on it and  
put-put on-put on it-sacred to-the m-  
e-m-o-r-y-of fourteen y-a-r-d-s-of  
three-ply-car--pet-containing all  
that was-m-o-r-t-a-l-of-of-W-i-l-l-i-  
a-m-W-h-e-

Blaine barely gets through the last of the recitation, his head starts nodding, he finally just folds over and then rolls to the floor. Once he's flat on the floor, on his back, in front of the barrel, there is a pause, and then a SNORE that sucks out the candle.

Immediately, there is the sound of several matches getting STRUCK, and then several of The Boys light other candles. All of The Boys are WHEEZING but otherwise silently shaking with laughter, all have tears dripping down their faces, some are doubled over and now themselves sag to the floor.

Mark Twain looks around the cabin, then finally gets up and walks over to Blaine, steps over the body, and sits down on the barrel.

## TWAIN

I perceived that I was "sold." I learned then that Jim Blaine's peculiarity was that whenever he reached a certain stage of intoxication, no human power could keep him from setting out, with impressive unction, to tell about a wonderful adventure which he had once had with his grandfather's old ram--and the mention of the ram in the first sentence was as far as any man had ever heard him get, concerning it. He always maundered off, interminably, from one thing to another, till his whisky got the best of him and he fell asleep. What the thing was that happened to him and his grandfather's old ram is a dark mystery to this day, for nobody has ever yet found out.

FADE OUT