

Only A Game

Tom Paxton

While stopping one innocent afternoon
For paper and magazines
My attention was drawn to a riot of colour
The loveliest I've ever seen
All in the shape of a plastic cube
Red and yellow and blue
"How lovely," I cried, "What a clever design!
Great, tell me sir, what does it do?"

"That's easy," he said as he handled my cash
And he dropped the cube into a sack
"Some of the colours you twist left or right
Some you twist forward, some back
Before very long if you're clever at this
You've got all the colours the same
And then if you like, you start over again
For it's fun and it's only a game."

"Only a game, only a game."
I'm muttering under my breath
"Only a game, only a game
Like dying is only death!"
I talk to myself as I walk down the street
Till old friends all cry, "What a shame!
For he used to say 'Hello!' and 'How do you do?'
All he says now is 'Only a game!'!"

That night after dinner, I settled myself
Planning to watch some TV
Safe in the warmth of my favourite chair
And the bosom of my family
Basking in fellowship, brimful of cheer
I bade my child, "Turn on the tube!"
And as I was watching my favourite show
I carelessly picked up the cube

I twiddled it this way, I twiddled it that
"Haha!" I exclaimed, "This is strange!
No matter how often I twiddle this cube
The blasted thing don't seem to change!"
I felt myself growing the slightest bit warm
As I twisted and whirled and spun
They tell me they found me there early next morn
I was screaming, "By God, nearly done!"

"For it's only a game, only a game."
I'm muttering under my breath
"Only a game, only a game
Like dying is only death!"
I talk to myself as I walk down the street
Till old friends all cry, "What a shame!
For he used to say 'Hello!' and 'How do you do?'
All he says now is 'Only a game!'!"

Somehow I got dressed and they drove me to work
And I slowly came out my haze
By a fierce act of will, I sat down to my tasks -

There was talk I might soon earn a raise
The boss called me into his office at ten
And he said to me, "Glad that you came!
For I'm thinking of adding this toy to our line
For it's fun and it's only a game!"

Well, I don't know what happened - I don't want to know
I'll have all my life to repent
They say I did something with that little cube
That the boss was obliged to resent
And now I get visitors here in my room
And they murmur, "Poor man, what a shame!
For he's twisting his ears and he's twiddling his nose
And he tells us it's only a game!"

"Only a game, only a game."
I'm muttering under my breath
"Only a game, only a game
Like dying is only death!"
I talk to myself as I walk down the street
Till old friends all cry, "What a shame!
For he used to say 'Hello!' and 'How do you do?'
All he says now is 'Only a game!'"