

Fred Small

"Leslie Is Different"

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The neighbor up the road brought the message
Joe and May never had a phone
Five children grown and gone to college
Now they lived out on Pewaukee Lake alone
And the nurse at the big Milwaukee hospital
Said "We've got a baby here with no eyes
It's retarded, it's got cerebral palsy
Six months old living only to die
And we remembered the tiny Englishwoman
Used to hire out as a nurse-governess
May Lemke, will you take this broken child off our
hands?"
And God loves a fool 'cause she said yes. She said:
CHORUS:
Leslie is different
Like everyone in the world
He's kind of awkward, he's kind of fragile
Kind of graceful, kind of tough
He's kind of slow, he's kind of clever
He's just Leslie and that's enough.
He just lay there helpless and silent
Not a tear, not a smile, not a word
But they held him and rocked him and sang him to
sleep
And talked to him as if he really heard
And he grew with the sun and affection
Though his body was spindly and small
And a hundred times they stood him with his hands
upon the fence
And a hundred times watched him fall
And their daughters warned it was useless
They said, "Mama, that boy will break your heart."
She said, "Love never comes easy
And miracles mostly come hard." She said:
CHORUS
May used to play the piano
And sing the old songs from the war
There was always music on the radio
And the records she bought at the store
And sometimes they swore he was listening
Though of course there was no way to know
Maybe he was flying in his own blue sky

Where no one else would ever go
Maybe he was lost in a forest
Where demons and woodspirits dwell
But for sixteen years he had never spoke a word
Never taken one step for himself. But they said:

CHORUS

Along about three in the morning
A ripple of music broke the night
Joe's fallen asleep at the TV again
May reached over to turn on the light
But the music kept getting louder
And the TV was quiet and cold
Leslie was playing the piano
And his fingers were agile and bold
A Tchaikovsky piano concerto
Like water breaking over a dam
A river of ecstasy flowed through his hands
And each note cried out, "I am." Because
CHORUS

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