

An Extra Chromosome For Fred

When I first looked at your brother
We knew that we were we
But I couldn't see in you
And you didn't look in me

You just slipped into the world
And fell asleep again
So I rested rather smugly
While they marked you out of ten

So casually they picked you up
Newborn with still-wet hair
They jotted down some hasty notes
"Parents unaware"

The nurse asked for a quiet word
And led us 'unaware'
To a group of white coats waiting
Who offered me a chair

"We think that there's a problem"
And the sun just ceased to shine
"A chromosomal defect"
This child they said was mine

The room was full of grown ups
And we were just a case
While searching for stigmata
Their learning gathered pace

This was not what we had chosen
This was not the child for us
So point remote control
Tape over all this fuss

Then the guilt of our rejection
And the need to tell them all
That we'd loved him from the outset
We were happy warts 'n all

And the need for him to know
That we loved him like his brother
That the two of them are equal
That I'm a loving caring mother

And the strength to keep the story
That a syndrome's fine by me
That I'm an educated mother
With a parenting degree

But what I wasn't ready for
What I couldn't have foreseen
Was the perfect imperfection
Of that random guilty gene

You have white blonde hair to die for
And stonewashed denim eyes
Pure humour at your inner core
And a Special Needs disguise

You were the child we needed
We didn't lose we won

Thank God I wasn't expecting you

Cause I know what I'd have done

By Mel Denne

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Poem which won the 7th UK Allcomers poetry slam at the Cheltenham Festival of Literature