You Had the Choice, Martha

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Blasphemy of love you cannot now abort:
Lesch-Nyhan. One in four hundred thousand
but when it's yours, a statistic isn't a number,
an X-linked trait, but a child. You clocked
your son's second month: gut, firm flat
dinner plate, no inflated rubber glove. Despite
the doctor's warning—a disorder that breaks
down purines in RNA and DNA that make up
the body's genetic blueprint—you did not
have Robby sucked out to be preserved in saline
and let scientists research his fetal bone.
You lugged yourself like a suitcase, elastic
as Siamese skin upholstering two bodies.

Unable to lift his head by seven months, you
learned terms like *athetosis* for writhing motions
and *chorea* for spasmodic movement of arms,
legs and face. You do not love Robby less
for his caged heart or because he must always
be lifted to the van, hands tied so he will not gouge
out his eyes, his teeth pulled to stop gnawing
at cheeks, lips. Scars are the letters you must keep
him from learning, knowing he is taught nothing
by the pain but that it feeds a need which can
not be filled. Your heart can never stop burning,
is fueled by his irreplaceable face grimacing,
twisted by words of love he longs to whisper.

Martha, go ahead. Spoon him your dreams,
even though your son, the trickster, spits them
back onto the kitchen tile floor. Slip, slide,
skate through. Lift your arms, an angel in flight,
in spite of what you do that is so human:
buying the blue bicycle, propping it by the bed
in Robby's room, building a ramp that you know
he will never pump, coast or brake, flinging gravel.

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