

One Basket · Sharon Bryan

Chance and ignorance give us a little
grace period. We do not have to choose
which redolent eggs will be lost,
which pause to become our children
spelling themselves out. *Elizabeth*
I might have called a daughter. How slow

I am to give her up altogether, how slow
to get the tone right, not a little
sentimental: dear Elizabeth.
I give her red hair, blue eyes, choose
her disposition. Imaginary children
are constant companions, like all lost

opportunities. I have willfully lost
myself in thoughts of angels, turning slow
on luminous pins. As our own children,
some of us tend ourselves like little
gardens. I do not want to say I choose
this, I turn my back on Elizabeth.

Anything is possible. Elizabeth—
not true. Those who believe it are lost.
It is not even that I must choose
between you and my work—you are slow!—
but I must unname you, hold you a little
to the light, see through you. No children,

no births, no pregnancies. Real children
can't wait for our next lives. Elizabeth
lulls me by demanding so little.
When Jacob wrestled the angel he lost
false fears and was blessed. The unbearably slow
motion of that battle forced him to choose

one life incessantly all night, to choose
this one. Again, this one. I have no children.
Too easy: I will not have. Knowledge is slow
to collapse on itself. Elizabeth,
may your half-truths unwind in the earth, be lost
in that acid babble signifying little.

When we are children we long to be lost
briefly. Elizabeth is a slow
name to unthread. I choose my way a little.