The Year My Grandfather Didn't Speak

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In the photo, Grampy pushes Betzebe, his Irish twin, in a wooden wheelbarrow. The first two siblings of sixteen live births. Confidantes staying out of the way from the hands-in-dirt farm work.

Betzebe died after potato harvest that autumn, buried on the rise with the grandparents. Grampy laid down near her grave day after day. His mother hauling him inside after he fell asleep.

The following fall, he helped harvest potatoes best he could for a boy his age. He hoped to pull out his sister, for she had gone into the ground.

With each potato put into the barrel, he wanted to dig up a tuber containing Betzebe. He pulled hundreds searching for the one.

As autumns passed, his desire to unearth his sister faded. Gramp moved off the farm, visited Betzebe’s grave less. Years later, when he sang Baby Face to me, he also sang to her.