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The Year My Grandfather Didn't Speak

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The Year My Grandfather Didn't Speak

by Julie Cyr

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.