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.