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Silence

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SILENCE

The heavy brass bell waits on my bookshelf to ring as it did daily when my great aunt Lizzie Belle—just out of high school—called pupils to Reader School, where she taught six grades in one room and stoked the fire. Lizzie Belle first saw me when she returned to the Sixth Street house at eighty-one, after years as nursemaid to Main Line families who didn't know her age. Me, the daughter of her dearest nephew who died young of a weak heart; reader of her newspapers when she went blind. She liked Dean Acheson, had strong views. Listened to quiz shows, made me answer questions like *What western state was named for a valley in eastern Pennsylvania?* Lively, unsentimental, alone. I hold her bell but don't shake it—for when a bell is rung someone should come.