

LESLEY WHEELER

## Cells All Ringing

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It was not the sick shudder of a small plane, windshield scratched, scenery blurred, or the snarl of a finger sliding beneath an envelope flap. It was more like waking up after a doze on a plastic raft, noticing the shore is far off and the sky deep plum—not terrifying yet, just enough time to paddle in, pack up blankets and slowly rusting chairs, children who are no longer small. Or it was like not hearing a toddler babble about toy sharks beyond a half-closed door, realizing you've been not hearing her for a few minutes now. She suddenly became fourteen and it's dinner and she's describing the pregnant girl in Earth Science as she doesn't eat her page of cod, scribbled with herbs and strips of wine-poached pepper. *I sort of admire her*, she says. *She's getting really fat now*. You correct her, unwarily: *Not fat. A seven-month-belly is hard and full of baby*. And then rising tones behind her fully-closed door. Daughter and friend emerge to ask, *How far along until you start to show?* It turns out to be another teenager, not your sensible girl whose slender left hip buzzes with texts until stars vibrate in a perfectly dark, dry night sky like messages, like fish in deep water or the unnecessarily frightened passengers

on a small plane about to land. A shell's secretive murmur reminds you of the sea but is really your own blood echoing through nearby coils. Sound reflected, not by a mirror. By the whorls of your daughter, loaded with mysterious cargo and about to launch.