

WE SEE INTO THE LIFE OF THINGS

ERIN HOOVER

From trucking money, John Hall built
a mansion with a tower of carillons,
Swiss bells his wife played, striking the keys
with her half-closed fists. Twenty summers
have passed since the estate sale where locals
offered the kind of money they paid
for their own homes, women ran fat fingers
over heart-shaped fireplaces, kids shot hoops
on courts stacked with crates, heavy
bells that used to fill the tower with sound
singing in Nashville, Ohio, Puerto Rico.
They say the son who ratted him out
for embezzlement still lives there,
shooting soup cans out back. No one knows,
most of the time, how fires start, but this
was once the richest man we knew.
For years the tower's shell has stood over
the whistling interstate, and closer,
Fuck everybody scrawled in red
in the foyer. How often I have returned
there—from my car on the highway,
extending my hand to replace the gray finger
of the tower with my thumb, or watched

disasters play out in my mind, as climbing
the spire, neighborhood kids split their skulls
on the floor of the elevator shaft. In them
I see my own small body, wedging my sneakers
inside the tower's spine, bound for the stars
that beamed through wall slats, a penthouse
whose couches bowed with the imprints
of junkies, ghost cigarettes dangling
from their lips. Mrs. Hall danced there
in a white dress, tan shoulders carrying
the hot husk of Tahiti summers, to humanity's
strange, hollow music. Once bells rang
brighter than gunshot, the caretaker
who takes out chicken noodle, beef broth—
a few hard, sharp dings, the shells landing
soft in the tower's shallow moat.
I come back here as if there is a thing
I forgot, some sound or sight or just
the heft of concrete, a monument to love,
the quiet night clamoring around me.