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The New Math

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Biddinger: The New Math

THE NEW MATH

Mary Biddinger

As if it mattered—
the number of inches or limbs,
volume of the fiberglass
blown into rooms above our heads,
the slippery elm boys felled
and paraded to the tracks

in case we gave prizes for such
things. You watermark the days
with obscurities: annunciation
is a dirty room without curtains,
frostbite inevitable as pollution,
cardinal shoving its fingers into

the damp hinges of ordinal
and coming through the other side.
There are places where all walls
are made of glass. How this
would make you cringe like drips
of lake water on hot sesame oil

or a Texas girl left in the hills,
my hills, the ones that knock you
onto your heels when looking up.
There are boards tied in trees
to warn against climbing.
The stream would leave you

heaving, and my laughter
like rebar dropped onto concrete.
Through ash and birch, bitchy jays
wait for the goods. Do not tell
me about your table, your dog's
attention span, the exact way

men hold their breath passing you.
Lean into the cattails as if this
was your last meal, the ephemera
of triangles spun to lace, your beloved
crimson dress slit with a clip point,
a hook for every quadrant.