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## It's All Too Much

Mary Biddinger

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## Biddinger: It's All Too Much

IT'S ALL TOO MUCH

Mary Biddinger

He was too sick to make trips to the VFW Hall for cold, cheap beer. She was too awake to put on a fox fur vest and rouge from a snuff box. The alleys were too perpendicular to the roads, so the runoff went north. When the ossified creams and lead feather whisks hovered above her bed at night, he was there too: all peacock and cormorant, so peregrine he vanished from sight when the busses heaved through an intersection. And the wheat germ strewn on the windowsill? Precaution. Some days her words would be used against her, like salmonella. He was too rough in the head to shuttle the pennies into their paper sleeves, preferring pockets. She walked thirty blocks west before finding the river moved. He was too occupied by minutiae like Avogadro and the depth of tar. She marinated a brisket in South African pinotage plus a box of cloves. It's a mean sky. In minutes it will make you turn back over yourself. It's shifty. She remembers when a shift was always a dress meant to be lifted over face and shoulders silhouetted in front of a window. His shifts were always noted by the blue penmanship of a time clock. His idea of hand cream was tallow and peppermint. Bee balm. Pumice. She was all under his hands like milk from a faucet. He got so lost one winter in the woods that he rebuilt everything, burned it down all over. His hands were all over her body. She cried at the sight of salvia or rue in a container garden under a remote control awning. Is it true they both looked forward to funerals, for the whisky? Did they ever wander past the monument at the same time, separately? He learned the ridge of her neckline was the best place to remember months in the service overseas. Or the underside of a rowboat. The vulnerable, white belly of a catfish.