

Poems by Mary Biddinger

HARD LABOR

Some days you're the coal miner
and some days you're the coal.

Other days you might be the tiny
wheels on a cart that's seldom used.

You might be the second best
lunch box that's only for emergency.

Sometimes you have to put your
clothes on while someone's sleeping.

Then, the opposite. The most you
can hope for is to become a shovel.

Because nobody buries a shovel,
and even the son of a shovel is useful.

You once saw an entire family living
inside an abandoned laundry cart.

The hardest work can be staying
warm and upright, and still blinking.

TO WILD

Perhaps I was some sort of banquet.
Then I became the worst kind of crasher.

Not like waves. More of a crazed ocelot
in a millinery shop, enemy to all

pre-tied bandannas. There's something
wrong about lobbying in an actual

lobby. If you are paid to throb publicly
then please wear diminished finery

like the stuff of statues: timid marble
leaves, concept but not execution

of laurels. It's hard to be the only one
trapped in the brambles. The sole

rabbit on a mulberry battleground
might as well be somebody's sandal.

Let's take this to the spirit level
was the advice of an average basilisk.

I wanted to be the kind of woman
who kept ribbons in numerical crypts.

BIO

Mary Biddinger's newest poetry collection, *A Sunny Place with Adequate Water*, will be published by Black Lawrence Press in May 2014. Her poems have recently appeared or are forthcoming in *Crazyhorse*, *Guernica*, *Gulf Coast*, *Denver Quarterly*, *Pleiades*, and *Sou'wester*, among others. She teaches poetry writing and literature at the University of Akron, where she edits *Barn Owl Review* and the Akron Series in Poetry.