For Mary, turning sixty

In *The dictionary of curious and interesting numbers*, sixty gets a whole page.

"Sixty is the eighth 'highly composite' number -- the first number with 12 divisors."

Highly composite, certainly. All those divisors snipping up her time.
Children. The fractious freelance clients. The publishing of other people's books.
The churches. The students. The friends, and her books -- their pages adding up slower than she'd like. Dividing her experience among characters, and multiplying herself by her imagination.

"Sixty is the base of a sexadecimal system of counting."

Mary will be glad to know it still includes sex.

"In astronomy, the very ancient division of the zodiac into twelve parts fits a sexadecimal system very well, and a decimal system not at all."

Mary always did fit better with her stars than with decimated dimes and dollars.
Gemini -- the star twins near the boat moon, clair de lune. In antiquity, their rising was a favoured talisman for sailors. This morning's horoscope advises her: 'Ignore those who tell you to stand pat. Emphasize universal appeal, welcome chance to travel.' As if we needed to tell her.
"We still divide an hour of time or an angle of one degree into sixty minutes, and each minute into sixty seconds. These are the only common measurements that have not been metricated."

No, it would be difficult to metricate Mary. You need uncommon measurements – a system for numbering laughter, for counting friends, an arithmetic of love.

The minutes tick away. She's only too aware how they divide the whole page of our days into a pile of confetti, something to run your fingers through, amazed how it can hold so much in so small a space.

But confetti also has its role in jubilation. We conclude that Mary is indeed both curious and interesting and is about to turn sixty upside-down.