

## Audrey and the Butterfly

Wide bay windows  
looking over  
a rolling meadow.

I dreamily visit  
the creatures there.

A butterfly shows me  
intricate moves  
and I practise her loops  
and feints

before flitting home  
in disarray.

One windowpane  
has me gazing inwards.

Think Escher print –  
wonder, wander  
black on white

stair on air.  
Flights rise to mirrored  
platforms.

They let me see better  
and watch out.

## Boxing Day Sales

On the day shoppers surge into city malls, Audrey drives the Newnes logging roads into the Wollemi wilderness. Pine plantations define the terrain, also pagodas of sandstone

reminiscent of Kyoto temples. A giant anthill appears, a small pyramid capping complex society, where supply passages stretch for miles. Audrey leaves the car to hike

the canyon trail. Swooning ferns stroke her arms and the ground tapers into a conduit between vertical walls indented by smooth bowl shapes, where a river once ran.

The canyon opens out. Audrey climbs the rock pagodas to emerge high over the Wolgan Valley. A glossy beacon – the Emirates Hotel – sprawls incongruously

on the plain, and Audrey doubts its future. After retracing her steps on the riverbed, she explores the Glow Worm Tunnel area, where mining companies blasted channels

through the rock and laid tracks to ferry shale coal. Remains of industrial junk pepper the landscape – gouging tools, rusting coal bins and twisted steel cables.

Backlit by clear sky, Audrey tentatively enters the mouth of the tunnel. There's a drip-dripping and the scent of minerals and forgotten time.

The passage rounds a bend into darkness. Pinpricks of light engulf her – glow-worms pulsing serenely on the walls, minding their own business.

## Icarus Considers Love

Stable love is something to yearn for  
but what are the odds?

My younger self conjured Gatsby worlds –  
couples streaming across minty lawns,  
grand marquees and music,  
champagne flutes twirling on dance floors.

My reality verged on The Crack-Up.  
I want relations but veer away from friends.  
Tales of epic coupling intrigue me –  
partners sailing the sea of love for decades.  
I watch how they eat croissants:  
tonguing the flakes, the buttery layers.

On dating platforms, I turn down prospects  
as they do me. Occasionally I swipe aside  
my doubts and meet a woman face-to-face.  
We swap morsels of backstory – linger here  
skate over there. I change mine  
each telling, so tired I am of hearing it.

For solace I turn to novels:  
Styron's Stingo wishing to tap the mystery  
of unstable Nathan and Sophie.  
Patchett's story of unlikely couples doomed:  
divine diva and Japanese industrialist  
callow terrorist and translator

all lending hope to a borderline misanthrope.

## Icarus Plunges In

Wisps of fog soften  
sandstone stairs chuting  
into ferny depths.

Ladders and bridges grant  
passage over craggy  
sections.

Icarus is venturing there  
when weather jolts  
the day.

Thunder roils the sky,  
cosmic groundsmen  
flick the lights.

Sheets of rain coax out  
reds and lurid greens  
and lofty tree limbs

swish like the arms  
of a giant groping  
in darkness.

More stone steps drop  
into a lush glade where  
a gnarled fig clings

to a boulder, its roots like  
tentacles holding on  
in a tsunami seascape.

A rising crescendo  
draws Icarus – a waterfall  
plummeting over a cliff

to a paroxysm and pooling  
at his level. Icarus strips  
down and plunges in.