

**Susan Bradley Smith**

## **Another Startling Experience**

Foreign keys: I have an institutional  
mail locker. Not a slot or a tray or a box,  
a little locker, the shape of a safe. Big  
enough for the female gossip-girl species  
to stash her family jewels or bonds or  
letters from lovers. I take stock, unlocking,  
and visualise tokens of my worth within.

Nothing there.

Three weeks into my new job I remember  
to check my mail. I imagine glossy things  
that will alarm me. I'm already wishing for  
sharp scissors, and worrying where the  
recycling bin lives. The keys work with clear  
ignition and certitude and I'm impressed  
with my accumulating work skills.

There's nothing there.

Then, looking like a 3D tattoo signifying  
some secret thing, deep in the corner lies  
a dead moth. I blow long and slow upon  
it. It quivers, turns upside down, then returns  
to dead. I am so grateful for this strange  
encounter. Finally, years too late, I know why  
my children are wildly vegan.

Message delivered.

---

**About the author:** Susan Bradley Smith is Senior Lecturer in Creative Writing at Curtin University. Her most recent works are the autobiographical verse novel *The Screaming Middle*, the poetry collection *Beds for All Who Come*, and *The Sadness*, a curated Instagram poetry installation. Susan is the Artistic Director of "Headlands: The Lennox Head Poetry Festival."

<https://www.instagram.com/bluepoetess/>

<http://ipoz.biz/portfolio-single/screaming-middle/>