Outside the Concentric Circles of Work

Tim and I are going to gather and stack
the wood sawn up from the colossal limbs
down during the big summer storm months
ago — they have dried out and are ready
to enter their half-life in the red shed.

The art of making a wood stack is one
thread to the afternoon’s activities,
but so are the birds and a jewel beetle
rising into nothingness on a stick lifted
from the ground. The earwig overwhelmed
by ants is beyond our saving and thus

our intervention, and the cavernous interior
of the red shed with its stripped-out stables
and rolls of fencing wire and flat-stacked
sheets of corrugated iron, and the air
pump cobwebbed and silent but ready
to draw water up from the very deep bores

we rarely touch in order to protect
the aquifer. The cavernous interior
of the red shed which has long been
a mystery to Tim with its planetoid
redback spider egg sacs, its smell
of stale hay, its eternal twilight.

While Tim works small pieces of wood
into the spaces between barrels of
eucalypt, I search growth rings
for the break in genetics, aberrant
patterns that will tell an alternative
tale of life on the hillside — spirals

from the tree’s beginning to its gross
shedding, its hand forced in high winds,
all jewel beetles and earwigs and ants
that have climbed its outer skin,
one layer away from the next season,
one away from the old season, a helix

ride to life longer than the span
written into their bodies, that perverse
endgame sold as identity that’s just
‘bad code’. And Tim full of the outdoors,
frolicking as he works, singing the Dandy
Warhols, building infinity, eternity, spirals.

John Kinsella