**The ghosts of crooks park**

by Lili Pâquet

Outside the cottage a rabbit chews on grass. The wind ruffles the paddocks that blanket the hills down to the creek. Pop is mustering on his horse in his battered trilby and Driza-Bone coat, a cigarette hanging loosely from his lips.

I overflow with anticipation as Nan pours batter into a tin and hands me the eggbeaters to lick. Her cat, Tuppence, purrs in a spot of tepid autumnal sun at our feet.

In Nan and Pop’s outhouse, the toilet bowl is always wallpapered with little green frogs. I wee quickly.

A bubble of mischief when Pop approaches his armchair to find me waiting. It’s like the quick and the dead around here, he drawls with a chuckle.

My twin cousins visit. They have new whips that echo like thunder.

I holler for Nan from the fence, as the farm dogs bounce below, my legs stinging from shallow scratches. Get out of it, you mongrels! She carries me away in her safe arms.

Apparently, it’s a resort now, where visitors sleep in old train carriages and the cottage, haunted by the aroma of Nan’s cakes and Pop’s cigarettes and the cracking of ethereal whips in the misty mornings.