David Campbell Prize:
Short-list: Lesley Lebkowicz - ‘The Spy, Volodya Petrov, leaves his home…’

The Spy, Volodya Petrov, leaves his home at 7 Lackyer Street, Griffith, on the eve of his defection.

Once again he’s about to be wrenched from the soil.
He remembers his father – struck by lightning, buried up to his neck by foolish men, and dying of this cure in the freezing night.
Then chaos and not enough food. Uprooting a full-grown plant is no simple thing; so many roots are wound through the earth. He mutters the Russian words for loss and home and ruffles his Aisatlan’s fur.
Jack whimpers and nuzzles him while Volodya holds his head still to receive the touch. In the kitchen his wife clatters cutlery.
He pads across the corridor to her room and opens a drawer.
Her soft things are slivers of loss he can touch. He brings the silk to his skin. In his own room he packs only what he always takes when he travels to Sydney – and the documents – then into Jack’s ear sighs out the weight of farewell.