

## **Apprehension**

*Lisa Stansbie*

It was with apprehension that we delivered the package to the man in The Wings. It was nearly six months since the last of the saddlers' wells had dried up and everyone, even the northern dancer, was forced to deal with the drought and periodic power cuts. The bars that lined the main street were now places of solace.

We had heard yesterday that Nearctic was now also without power and as we stood waiting nervously, Natalma the owner was already lighting candles in readiness around the semi-circle of the bar. This gave it the appearance of a fairy bridge, propped up with soulless creatures who, without a bold reason to consider leaving, remained in their special places.

The Wings was a dreary place, even with power. The grimy image hanging above the bar of a high hawk appeared to be circling over the customers, most of whom were out of work miners from Shirley Heights.

In whispered moments throughout the journey we had speculated about the contents of the package. It could contain the results of drilling from the Mill Reef, but Hardiemma didn't agree and explained that if drilling had taken place, the rest of the group would surely have appeared sun bitten or shown some signs of a tussle with the sea hawk.

The bartender offered us pantoufle with our drinks and we accepted, even though it was now triple the price. Placing one in my mouth and leaving it to melt I thought of the time I ate it in the orchard during a sticky summer after my first kiss with Kris. I must sharpen up I thought, Atan Rocchetta had entrusted us with this duty and we must be doubly sure to live up to his reliance on us.

The first thing that caught my eye was the Soft Angels' insignia on the back of his jacket. As we sat down he identified himself quietly as Primatie, and introduced us to Lassie, his companion. His vaguely noble air made me think he must have connections with the Vienna block. A man dressed like this, dignified and elegant didn't merge well with the pistol packers at the bar. I had begun to relax by studying him carefully but then, quite unexpectedly I felt a gun bow at my knee. Trying to steady my shaking voice as I spoke, I used my only escape route, 'I am George's girl'.