

# Anticipation

*by* Sandra Davies

The letter lay unopened on the table. He did not need to open it since two of his brothers had already received identical ones and phoned to tell him. And he read the differently-worded missive which the one who had not phoned received, before dealing with him.

Now he sat waiting, his eyes gazing across the sun-browned grass, beyond the distant fence, to the even further distant road which marked the boundary to his estate. As soon as he saw the tell-tale, and appropriately bridal, train of up-rising white dust, he reached for the letter, placed it in the saucer, having removed the now-empty coffee cup, drew his lighter from his pocket, sparked a flame and put it to the corner of the envelope. A brief swirl of smoke caused him to cough, just the once, and then he watched as the paper changed from cream to black to grey, inked words standing momentarily separate, neon-imitation. When all was reduced he picked up the saucer, blew gently and dispersed the pale ash downwind before replacing the cup.

Two minutes later Alicia Morgan stepped out of her car. Her smile faltered momentarily and he saw that she assumed the mistake was hers, assumed that given a list of four brothers — four potential husbands — she had somehow mismatched names to faces.

He admired the courage with which she reapplied her smile, while deploring her stupidity.

