

# Occasional cloud

*by* Sandra Davies

He regarded her, seriously, closely examining her face in a way she hadn't experienced for some time. And although she was aware that the sun was shining full onto it, leaving his slightly shaded, it didn't feel uncomfortable: she didn't feel he was looking to criticise so much as to *know* her. As far as she could tell he'd not changed one iota since they'd last spoken, she couldn't remember the quantity of hair he'd had then ...

'Has she upset you?' he asked.

She was startled, almost into honesty, but caught herself in time, 'Upset me? No, of course not,' but he continued looking at her and there was something in his eyes that caused her to feel shame at her lie.

'Well, no more than usual — *you* know.' And she tried to laugh, to justify her half evasion, to dismiss the memory of their vitriolic breakfast conversation.

'No.' he said, as straightforward and uncompromisingly honest as she remembered him being, 'I don't know. I remember her as a bit confrontational, clever enough to use words to be hurtful, but I don't know how she'd be with you.'

There was another pause, while he continued to look at her, no less gentle, but totally without guile, without ... she realised, with a small shock .. any sort of social filter, any veil of politeness. Which was not to say he was rude, just ... well, *uncivilised* sounded ruder still ... and really, when 'civilised' too often meant two-faced bloody hypocrisy, it was no bad thing, once you got used to the idea. And in thinking that that was an idea, an approach she *would* like to get used to, she said 'Would you like a coffee, have you time?' and smiled again at his 'I've all day.' as she led the way indoors.

