

Chapter One

Mubuso stared through the grimy window of the *skoro-skoro* bus at the lush green view of the escarpment. The bus had lumbered up a long hill, past a sign in black and white lettering on the side of the road -MHANGURA 10- and now it was plunging down a steep slope at great speed, so that the passengers were rocking from side to side, and the tyres were squealing as the driver tried to slow his vehicle down.

"I hope he has brakes," whispered Sarah to her brother, but he simply grunted and continued staring out at the landscape, which she now saw was a series of rolling hills, interrupted by the grey granite outcrops of rock so characteristic of Zimbabwe. Sarah gazed at the road which snaked far ahead of them down and around the kopjes and then into a flat green area of wild grassland. Mubuso was scowling again, which meant he was deep in thought, probably about the same things she was thinking about. How were they going to manage in the country, away from the big city of Harare? She had left behind all her friends, and so had he, but he was a more solitary teenager, and stuck to himself. He would probably be alright out here in the Lomagundi area. But she had left behind a string of admirers at school. And now the Christmas holidays were here, it had been very unfair to be whisked off to an unknown village. She had never even heard of Mhangura until her mother had told them that was where their uncle lived. She bit her bottom lip, a habit she had acquired at school, and she brushed her shiny black hair. Sarah was a pretty girl, with large soulful eyes, lips always curving into a natural smile and a shining personality that couldn't keep her still. Her brother was more moody and solitary, and she couldn't stand it the way he took things like this in his stride. She wanted to talk the whole journey about why they were going away, what they were going to do there for a whole four weeks, and who they were going to meet, but he had said nothing. As the older brother, he had been told all the intricate details of their mother's financial problems, but she had been kept in the dark. She only knew that it would be better for them to be out of their mother's hair for a while.

"Have you met Uncle Magadzwe?" she prodded her brother, who turned and raised his eyebrows.