

CHAPTER ONE

High on the plateau, evening crept across the sky. Swallows pitched and swung through the air, and a small breeze lifted the grasses, sending a ripple across the surface of the reservoir. The breeze shivered through the grey leaves of the old gums, and gently picked up the skirts of a woman carrying buckets across the flat ground. A fabric kappie hid her hair, its floppy brim obscuring her face. Her tattered skirts brushed the tops of buttoned boots, their soles gaping with each step. The tin buckets were heavy. The handles cut into her blistered hands, causing her to wince as she walked, her bony shoulders taking the strain.

On the slope below the plateau, Alistair's herd of blesbok looked up from their grazing and the male snorted a warning. The woman placed her buckets on the ground, side by side. Bending low, as if ducking through a low door, she disappeared.