

A
Winding
ROAD



Paulette R. Johnson

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Chapter One

“They’re here, Mom,” shouted Brian as he dashed off the front porch and down the steps. In a few strides of his long legs, he reached his father’s silver grey sedan as it pulled into the driveway. His younger sister, Veronica, ten years old, was close behind. His dad had gone to the airport to pick up Aunt Jen and her family. They were visiting Tradora for two weeks, and they were from America. Brian couldn’t wait to see his cousin David. He didn’t really know him. David and his parents left for America several years ago.

“Hey, David!” shouted Brian, as David emerged from the vehicle. David was now thirteen, a year older than he, and a little shorter.

“Hey, Bri!” said David with a bright smile as they hugged. Wow, thought Brian, David has an American accent. Brian recognized it from the American movies like *Superman* and *Batman* that he often watched on TV. He was really fascinated by that accent.

“My, my, how you’ve grown, Brian, and you too, Veronica,” said Aunt Jen, getting out of the vehicle and hugging them.

“Welcome to Tradora, Aunt Jen,” said Brian. This was his favorite aunt. He wondered what presents she had brought him from America.

Brian’s dad and Uncle Julian began unloading the suitcases from the trunk. There were six altogether. Brian grabbed a large, red-trimmed black suitcase and pulled it along the driveway. Veronica followed suit and helped Aunt Jen with her small carry-on bag. As they trooped into the house, they were met at the door by Brian’s mom.

“Welcome, welcome!” said his mom, kissing her sister and her family as they entered the house.

“Mmmm... I smell something nice!” said Aunt Jen, sniffing the air.

“It’s making me hungry.”

“It’s good to see you all! How are you, David? You have grown some. When you left Tradora, you were just a toddler.”

“I’m fine, Aunt Mavis. It’s good to be back.”

The Duncan’s home was a modest three-bedroom house painted cream with green trim. It was not too small, nor was it large compared to some of the houses in the neighborhood. In the front was a neat little garden with flaming red hibiscus, yellow and gold marigolds, pink zinnias, and other colorful tropical flowers. They sat in the living room, which was adorned with a deep salmon-colored sofa and matching love seat. The walls of the living room were a light yellow, and yellow lace curtains hung from the windows.

Brian looked at David. He was wearing jeans, sneakers, and a striped blue tee shirt. He seemed like a nice kid. He was glad that he was about his age. It would have been terrible if he was much older or if he was a small kid. They should have fun together.

“Brian, show David to your room, and Veronica, you can take Aunt Jen and Uncle Julian to my room.” Brian’s mom and dad would sleep on the pull-out sofa in the living room for the duration of their relatives’ visit.

“Okay, Mom. Come along,” said Veronica, springing up and taking her aunt by the hand. Uncle Julian followed.

Brian led David to his room, where the walls were painted blue, his favorite color.

“You can have my bed,” said Brian. “I’ll use the folding cot in the corner.”

“Fine!” said David as he dropped his large brown suitcase in a corner. “I see you really like cricket,” he said as he studied the posters on Brian’s walls. One showed a smiling Brian posing with a player. “But my favorite game is basketball,” he added.

“I like basketball too, also soccer,” said Brian. “But, I like cricket better.”

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“Oh, I’ve watched cricket once or twice on TV, and I think cricket is kinda boring,” said David. “I’d really like to shoot some hoops while I’m here. Do you have a basketball and hoop?”

“No,” said Brian. “I’ll ask Dad to get us a basketball and hoop,” added Brian with a forced grin.

“I guess we can set it up in the backyard,” said David.

“Yeah,” said Brian. He didn’t like David’s tone of voice. He seemed kind of bossy. Is it because he was from America?

“Lunch is ready!” shouted Mrs. Duncan from the kitchen.

As Brian and David entered the dining room, David’s eyes lit up. “Wow! Curried chicken! That’s my favorite.”

“You all must be starving.” Brian’s mom chuckled. “They don’t feed you well on planes these days.”

On the dining-room table were a large dish of curried chicken, a platter with baked red snapper, a bowl of steaming rice, fried yellow plantains, spinach, macaroni and cheese, and a large jug of ginger beer. For dessert there were yellow slices of mangos and round juicy pineapple slices.

“How long did it take you to cook all of this, Mavis?” Aunt Jen asked her sister.

“Oh, not that long.”

“More than a day, I bet,” said Aunt Jen with a chuckle. “Tomorrow night, dinner is on us. We’ll all dine at the finest restaurant in town.”

“Yes!!” Brian could not contain his excitement at the thought of dining out. His family didn’t. They couldn’t afford it. His father worked as a clerk at the water department in town and his mom was a nurse at the local hospital.

“Where are we going, Aunt Jen?” he asked.

“It’s a surprise!” Aunt Jen replied with a mischievous grin.

“Please, please tell us!” pleaded Veronica as she came into the room.

“No, no! I’m not telling,” Aunt Jen insisted as she took her seat at

the table. "You'll find out tomorrow."

They all enjoyed the dinner. Veronica helped her mom clear the dishes. Afterwards, everyone sat in the living room and watched TV. There was a lot of information about the upcoming Independence celebrations.

"Tradora will be celebrating twenty-five years of independence," said Brian proudly. "I learned that in our history class last week. There will be a carnival. The celebrations this year will be spectacular!"

"A carnival! That's awesome," said David.

"That's why we came to Tradora at this time," said Aunt Jen. "We're hoping to join in the celebrations and have some fun in the sun," she added with a chuckle.

"My class will be singing one of the popular folk songs at the concert in the national park," said Veronica.

"It really sounds exciting," said David. "I'm so glad we came."

"Great!" Brian said. "We'll have fun!" He began to relax. David sounded pretty nice after all. Maybe his fear that David would be bossy had just been his imagination.