

The Water Walk

"Go get the water!" Mom yells at you. You are in the middle of feeding the chickens, but now that was going to have to wait. When Mom yelled, it was time to listen! Ok, so just scatter the rest of the feed across the pen, put the feed sack back in the barn, and pick up the two old, splintery wooden buckets and head down toward the river.

Actually, fetching the water from the Santa Cruz at this time of year is something you love to do- the water is clear and cold from winter's snow melt and feels so refreshing when you dip your hands into it to splash a little on your face and neck after the long walk. Dipping one bucket into the rushing water, you imagine all the things Mom will do with it once you get back to the house- heat some up on the stove for your little sister's morning bath, refill the drinking jug so you all have enough to last the rest of the day, and fill up the wash tub for the day's laundry.

"I'd better get a move on," you think. "Mom won't be too happy if I dawdle here and she has to wait for me." Heaving the heavy, dripping buckets onto the thick stick across your back, you start the trudge back home, making sure to balance them so none of the precious water spills. You remember the last time you weren't careful and too much splashed out. Mom had tersely muttered, "Go back and get more!" Once a day was hard enough - you don't want to make that long round trip again!

The Long Walk

A crow calls out across the sleepy African village. Akua rolls herself out of her cot and rubs her eyes. She is always the first one to wake up and must wake up her older sisters for the job ahead. This takes time because her sisters are lazy and don't like to do their chore. Akua doesn't really like it either, but she knows she has to so that her family can stay alive.

"Let me sleep in!" Akua's sister grumbles from her ragged cloth pillow. Akua shakes her head and continues to nudge her. Her sister gets up and forces the oldest one out of bed. They all put on their baggy shirts and sandals before heading out of the house. Akua grabs her water container and tosses the bigger ones to her older sisters.

"C'mon," shouts Akua to her other sisters. She always walks more quickly than her sisters. They love to talk about the boys in the village or things that other girls found or made. They never realize that their talking slows them down and makes their two hour trip that much longer. The path they have to take to the nearest river is a long dirt path that climbs up a rocky mountain face. Many times in the past, Akua or one of her sisters would accidentally twist their ankle or cut themselves on a sharp rock. The trip was and still is very dangerous.

After two long hours of walking under the beating hot sun they finally make it to the lake. They each dip their water buckets into the muddy and murky water. Akua's sister reaches into the lake with her hand and scoops up a handful of water to her lips. Akua runs over and slaps her hand, "You know that's not a good idea. We have to wait until we get home and boil the bad stuff out."

Her sister sighs, "I'm so thirsty though, Akua." Akua pats her sister on her back and gestures back to the path. They have another two hour journey back home before they can get a drink. They lift their buckets up onto their head and start back down the long, hot road back home.