

Malaika Gets the Water

Malaika is a smart girl that lives in a small rural village. Her home is made of straw. Her bed is made of straw. She lives with her mother and her dog. Malaika likes to play outside with her dog. Sometimes Malaika could spend the entire day playing outside with her dog. She loves her mother and her dog. Most importantly, she always listens to her mother. One fine day, Malaika's mother says it's time to get the water. Malaika was busy but she knows when her mother says, "it's time to get the water" that she must stop what she is doing and get the water. She dreaded the idea of traveling so far for water but it was customary to do so. Water was scarce in her small village so each family was responsible for the task. The trek for the water is far so Malaika's mother gave her a small snack before she headed out. After a short while, Malaika grabbed the bucket and started walking. The bucket had a small rope that she could wrap around her forehead while walking. She could also easily carry the bucket on her head since it was empty.

Malaika didn't waste any time in her journey to get the water. Her dog started following her but she waived him away because she didn't want to be distracted. After all, if she dropped any water on the way back home, then her mother would be extremely disappointed in her. Malaika finally reached the pump with the water and started filling her bucket. Now that the bucket was full, she had to carry the bucket on her head. She practiced this with her mother several times so she knew she could do it. Distracted by the nature around her on her journey to get the water, Malaika decided to take a quicker way home. The quicker way would take Malaika through nearby villages. She didn't want to disturb anyone but she thought that she wasted enough time. Malaika was walking a bit slowly now that the bucket was filled with water. The bucket was heavier than she thought. As she was walking, she encountered something that she

could never have never believed. She encountered people that looked like her but were quite different.

Malaika's first encountered a man resting peacefully in a small hut made of just straw like her home. Malaika being of the age of curiosity could not help to say hello to the man resting. She knew that she should not disturb him but she was drawn to say hello. Malaika knew that certain villages were considered off limits because AIDS inflicted the people. She hesitated but she just had to see for herself. Malaika knocked on the door and she was greeted by warmth and friendliness. The man was very friendly and he offered Malaika a seat and he motioned to her to put down her bucket. Malaika observed that there was nothing in his home except for his bed and one cup made from mud. She did not see either any food or any water. She trembled at the idea of being in this village and sitting in this man's hut. What would her mother say? Malaika had been warned to stay out of certain villages. The man could see that Malaika was uncomfortable. He assured her that AIDS was not contagious and she was safe. Malaika believed that man to be truthful so she stayed. They talked about the weather and being outside. Malaika liked being outside with her dog. She missed her dog. Suddenly Malaika jumped up forgetting that she had to get home. She always listened to her mother and she had already unknowingly disobeyed her by stopping to say hello to the man. Before leaving, Malaika shared some water with the man. She gently poured some water in his mud cup and helped him drink it. Malaika said her goodbyes and started walking a little faster to get home.

Malaika had to shorten her journey home even more now so she had to go through another village with more straw huts but not as many people. As she was walking, she saw one hut with no windows and no doors. In this hut, there was a pregnant woman lying on her back. Malaika observed that the woman looked sick. Malaika could see that the woman's feet were

swollen and that she had sores not just on her feet but also on her lips. Her whole body was sweating profusely. She thought that she had malaria but she never encountered anyone with malaria before. Malaika did see some food on a table. The flies gathered on the food so she assumed the food had been there for some time. This woman's mud cup, similar to the resting man with AIDS was empty. Malaika knew that she could not stay to talk but she offered the woman some of her water. She put her bucket down and poured water into the mud cup. Malaika gave the pregnant woman not one cup with 2 cups of water. She helped the pregnant woman drink the water. Malaika gently held the mud cup to her mouth so that she could slowly sip the water. Malaika apologized to the pregnant woman because she could not stay. Malaika said her goodbyes and started walking a even faster to get home.

Malaika had to shorten her journey twice as much to get home so she walked through another village with only one straw hut. She wasn't sure if it were actually a village because she could not see any other huts but this one straw hut. Being the curious girl that she was, she entered the straw hut. This time, she didn't announce herself but she was shocked by what she saw. There was an old man with a dog. Malaika could tell that he was an old man because his skin was wrinkled, he had a cane and his hair was white as snow. The dog's hair was white as snow and his eyes looked incredibly sad. She knew he was an old man because old men in her village looked the same. Both the man and the dog looked to be of the same age. The man was sitting in a chair and the dog lay at his feet. She greeted the man but he did not respond. He just held out his hand and Malaika gently shook his hand. Malaika petted the dog and a tear appeared in her eyes as she started to remember her dog. She must get home. Once again, Malaika observed his straw hut and she didn't see a bed but she saw a table with a plate, a mud bowl and a mud cup. Malaika was really out of time and she knew her mother would be getting very

worried. She remembered that it is important to help one's elders. She did not put her bucket down. She offered the man some water and he accepted. She could not help the old man drink his water. Malaika figured that if he had the strength to lift his arm to shake her hand then he could drink his own water. She poured water for the dog in the mud bowl. Malaika said her goodbyes and started running to get home.

Malaika wondered why her bucket felt light but she had no time to check it as she was late. She could see her village in the distance so running had helped her make up some time. She finally arrived in her village just before nightfall. Malaika could hear her mother weeping. She slowly entered her straw hut and surprised her mother. Her mother hugged her and she wept a little more before talking. Her mother asked, “ Why did you did take so long to return with the bucket of water. Malaika was surprised that her mother was not angry. While standing in the corner of her straw hut, she put her bucket down and looked inside. Her bucket was only half full. How did this happen? Finally, Malaika could speak. She explained to her mother that she encountered three people while returning from getting the water. She gave one cup to a resting man with AIDS, a pregnant woman with malaria and an old man with a dog. Her mother was not pleased but she was not displeased. Malaika started to weep. Her dog whimpered at her feet. Malaika's mother looked in her eyes and said, “ That's why I named you Malaika because you are an Angel.”

The End