

## Excerpt from *A Long Walk to Water*

### Chapter Three

Southern Sudan, 2008

The smudge on the horizon gained color as Nya drew nearer, changing from hazy gray to olive green. The dirt under her feet turned to mud, then sludge, until at last she was ankle-deep in water.

There was always so much life around the pond: other people, mostly women and girls, who had come to fill their own containers; many kinds of birds, all flap and twitter and caw; herds of cattle that had been brought to the good grazing by the young boys who looked after them.

Nya took the hollowed gourd that was tied to the handle of the plastic container. She untied it, scooped up the brown muddy water, and drank. It took two gourdfuls before she felt a little cooler inside.

Nya filled the container all the way to the top. Then she tied the gourd back in place and took the padded cloth doughnut from her pocket. The doughnut went on her head first, followed by the heavy container of water, which she would hold in place with one hand.

With the water balanced on her head, and her foot still sore from the thorn, Nya knew that going home would take longer than coming had. But she might reach home by noon, if all went well