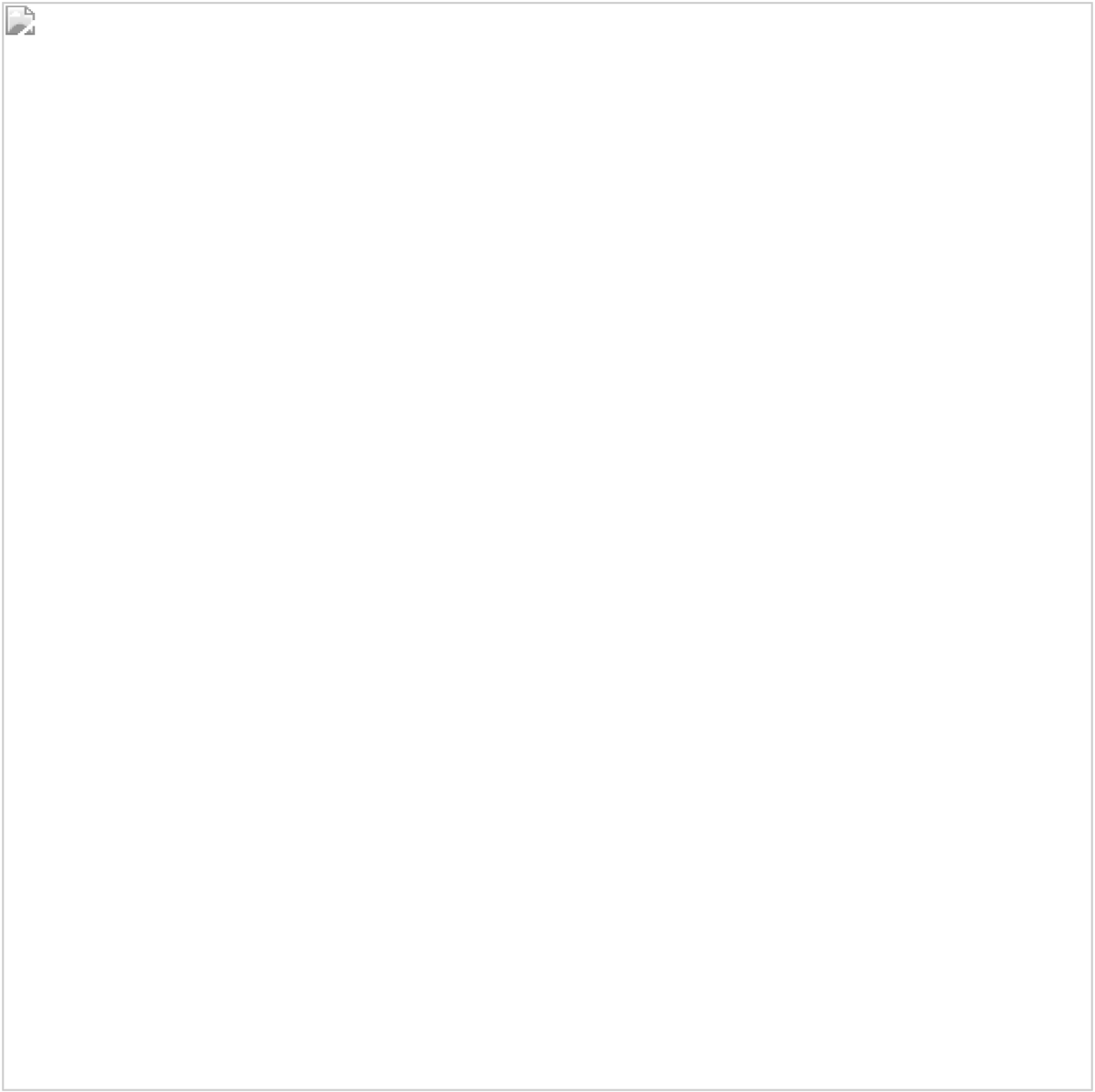
COLORING THE CLASSICS

Baucis and Philemon

A Myth of Greece and Rome



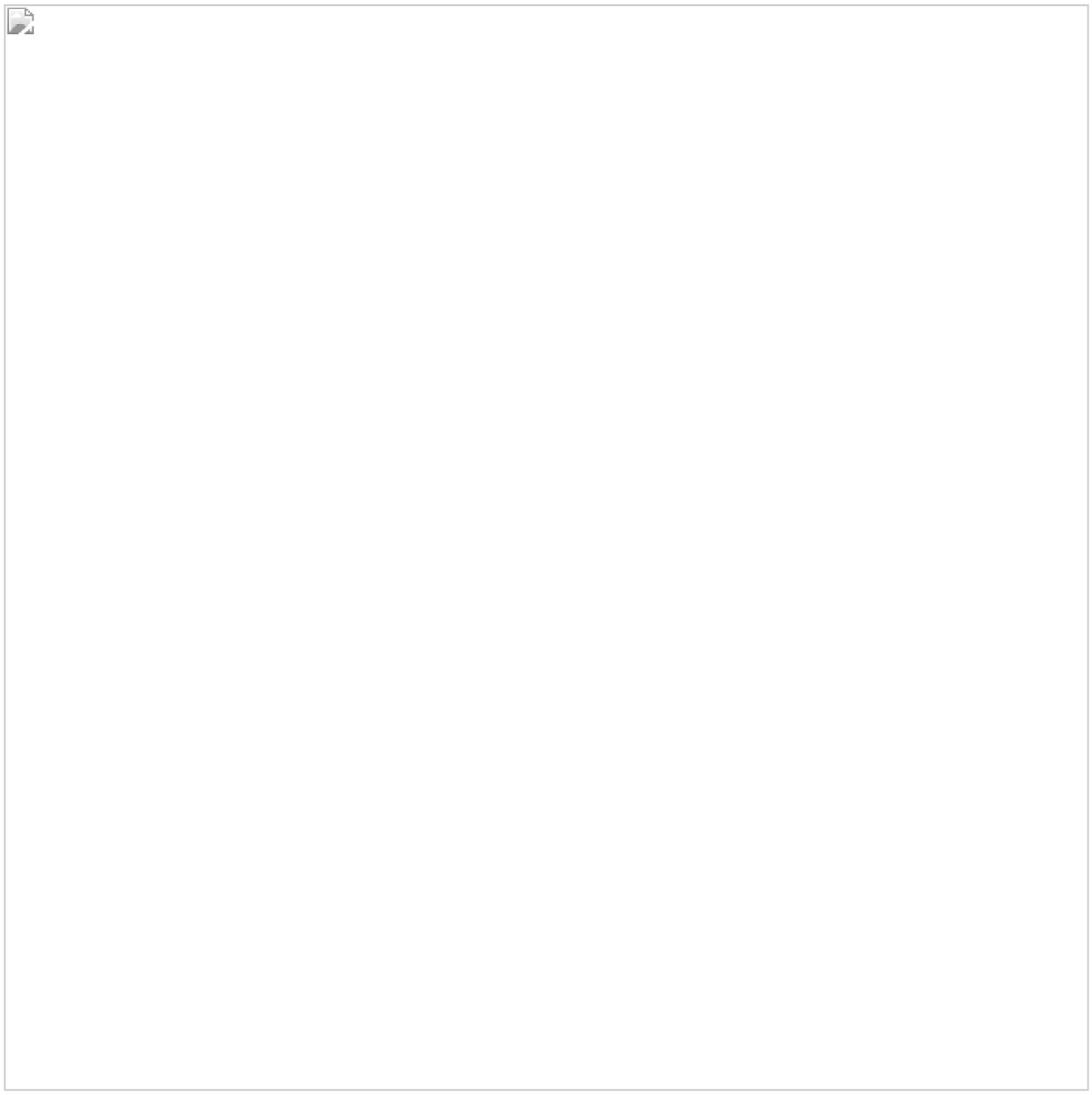
One evening long ago, old Philemon and his wife Baucis sat at their cottage door, watching the sun go down and talking about their garden, their cow, and the pears and apples that were nearly ripe.

TALK ABOUT IT

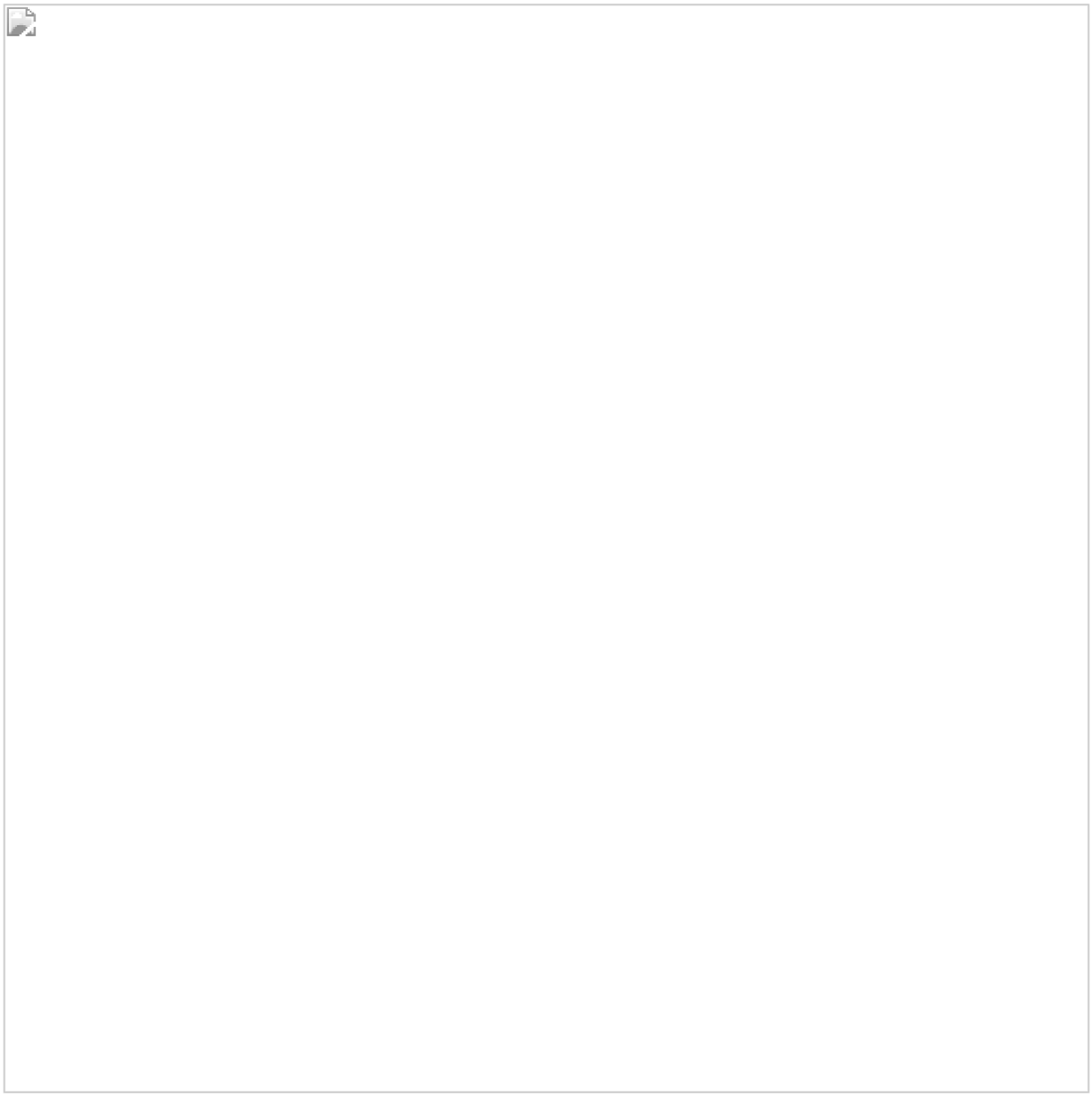
Baucis and Philemon liked to sit and talk at the end of the day. What do you like to do when the day is done?

This book belongs to _____

Baucis and Philemon · another picture



The Cottage on the Hill



Their little cottage stood on a hill.

They were poor. Most days they ate bread and milk and vegetables, with a little honey from their bees and a few pears and apples from their garden.

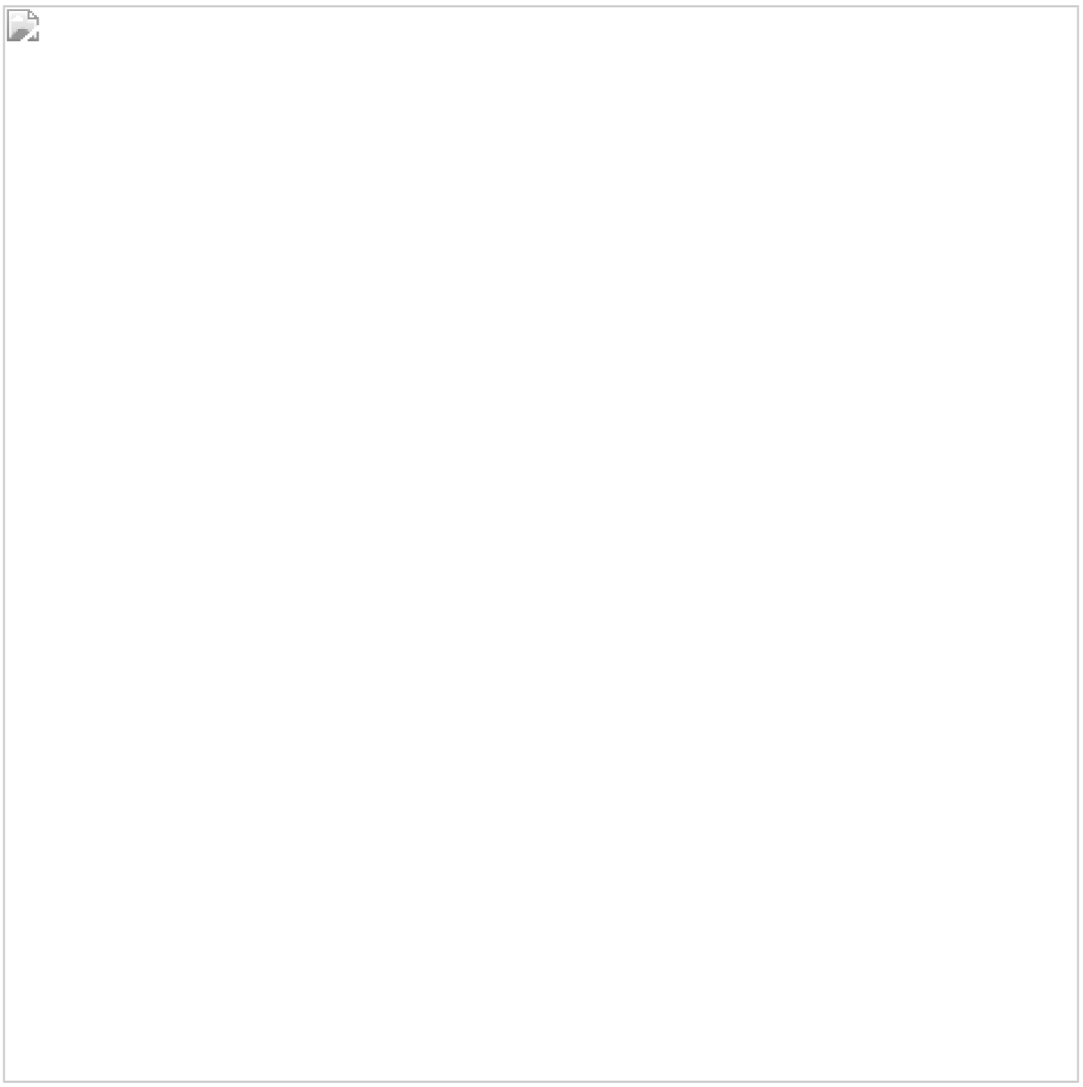
But they were two of the kindest old people in the world. “So long as we have a crust of bread,” Baucis said, “let us always be willing to give half of it” to a stranger in need.

“Indeed, that we will,” said Philemon.

TALK ABOUT IT

Baucis and Philemon had very little. Why do you think they still wanted to share?

The Cottage on the Hill · another picture

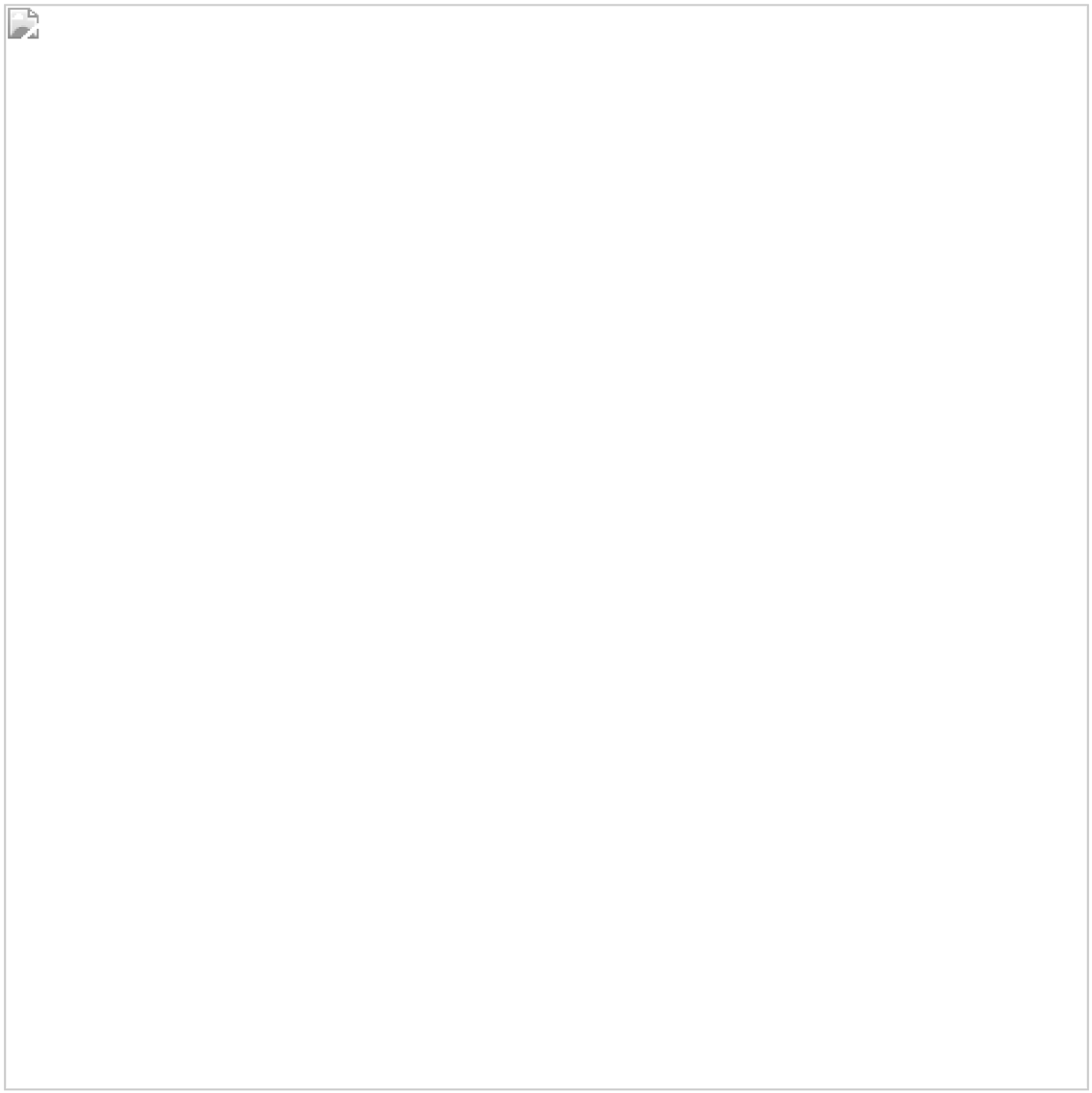


Think about it

1. What did Baucis and Philemon promise to do?

- ○ Keep all their food
- ○ Share half their bread with a stranger
- ○ Move to the city

The Unkind Village



Down below the hill lay a pretty valley, shaped like a cup, full of green fields and fruit trees.

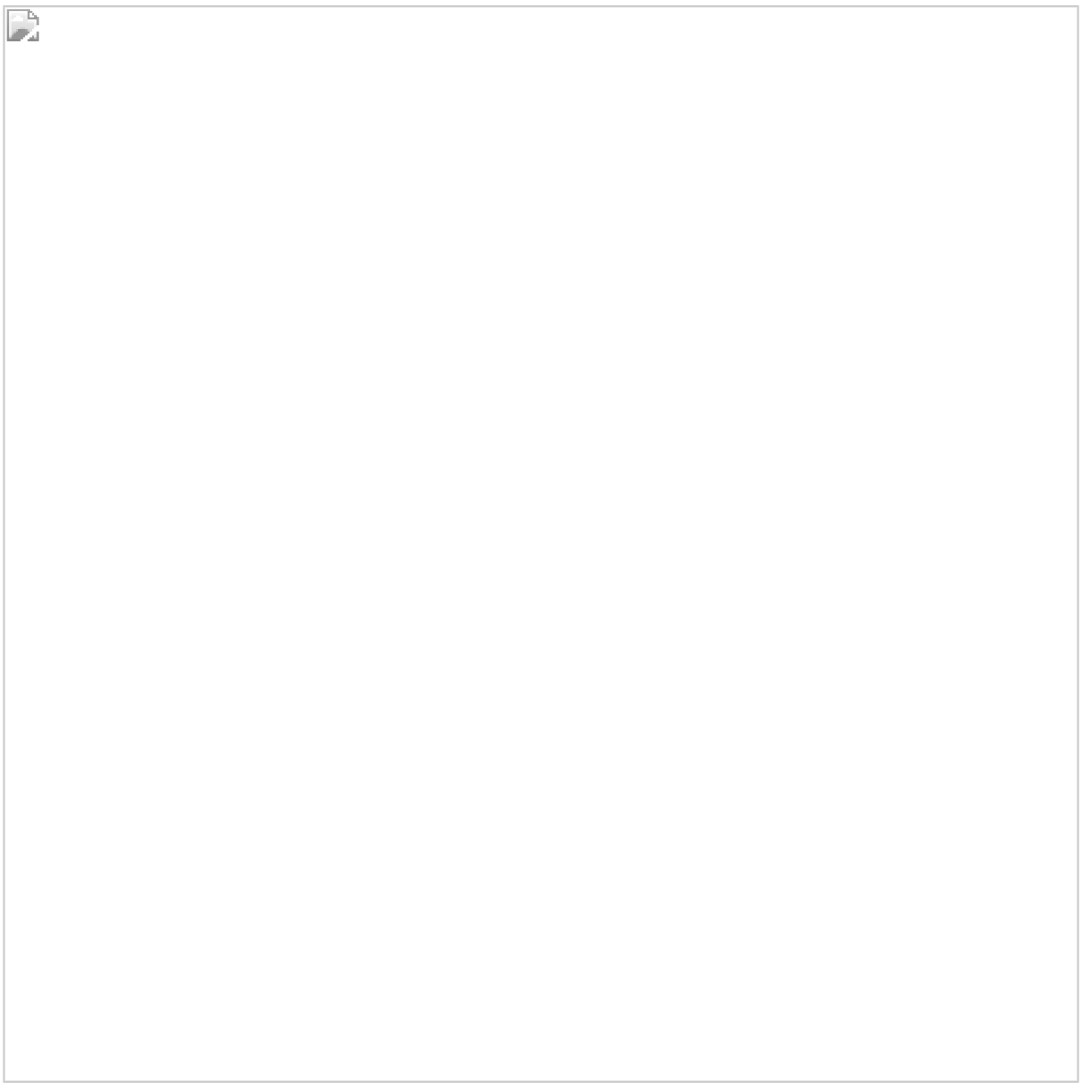
But the people of the village there were selfish and hard-hearted. When a tired traveler in shabby clothes came by, they laughed, and their children shouted, and their dogs snarled.

Yet when a rich man rode through on a fine horse, they took off their hats and bowed.

So the village was known far and wide as a place where no one would find help.

TALK ABOUT IT

The villagers were polite to rich people and rude to poor people. Is that fair? Why or why not?

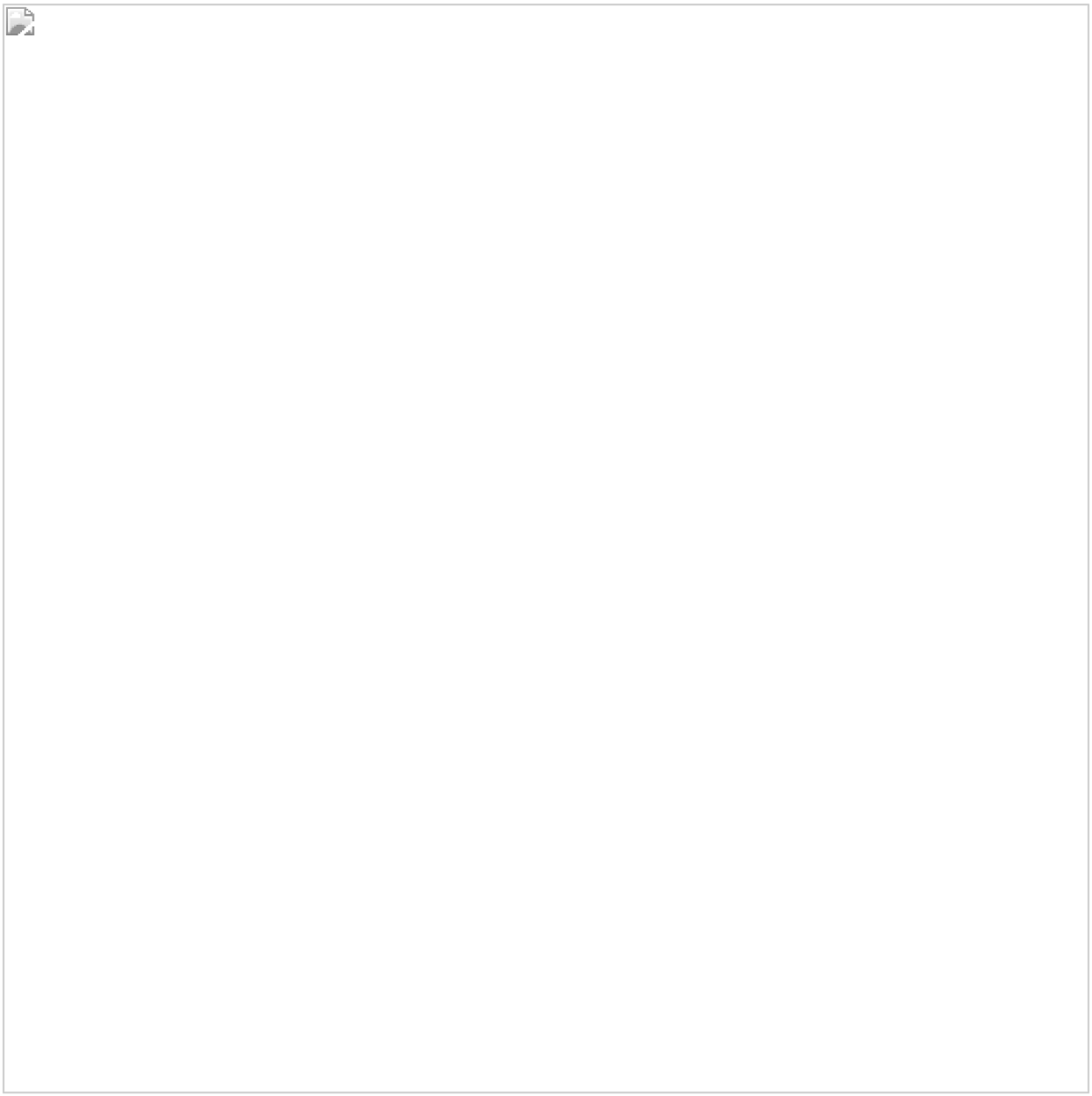


Think about it

1. How did the villagers treat poor travelers?

- ○ They gave them dinner
- ○ They laughed at them and set dogs barking
- ○ They gave them a bed

Two Strangers



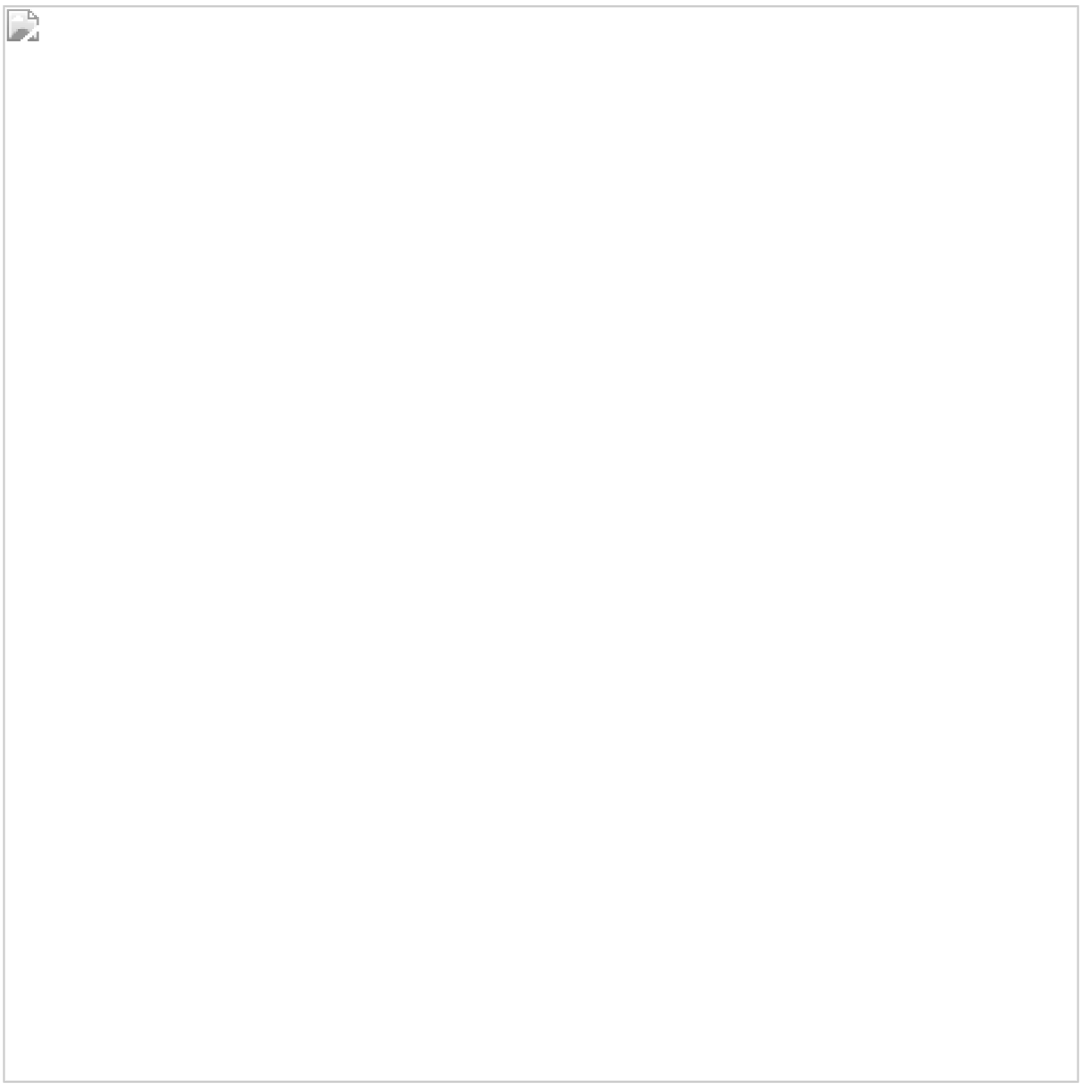
One evening, Baucis and Philemon heard shouting and barking. Two travelers were coming up the road on foot, plainly dressed, with children throwing stones and dogs nipping at their heels.

“Come, wife,” said Philemon, “let us go and meet these poor people.”

Baucis hurried in to make supper, and Philemon went down the road and held out his hand. “Welcome, strangers, welcome.”

TALK ABOUT IT

Philemon walked out to meet the strangers before they even asked. Why do you think he did that?

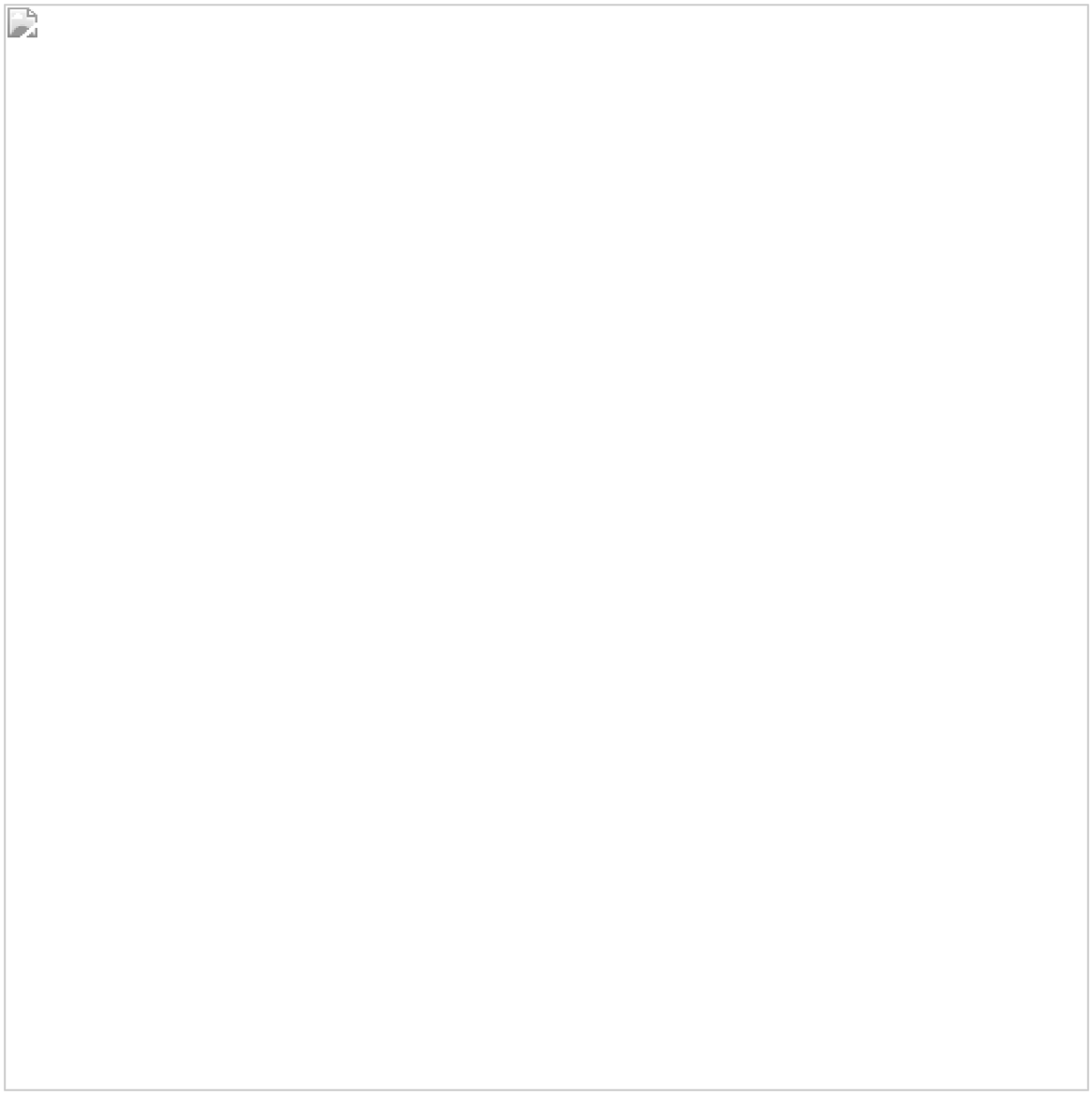


Think about it

1. What did Philemon say to the strangers?

- ○ “Go away!”
- ○ “Welcome, strangers, welcome.”
- ○ “Do you have money?”

The Odd Little Staff



The younger traveler was thin and quick, with a cap that stuck out over his ears. He carried a wooden staff with a little pair of wings near the top and two snakes carved around it.

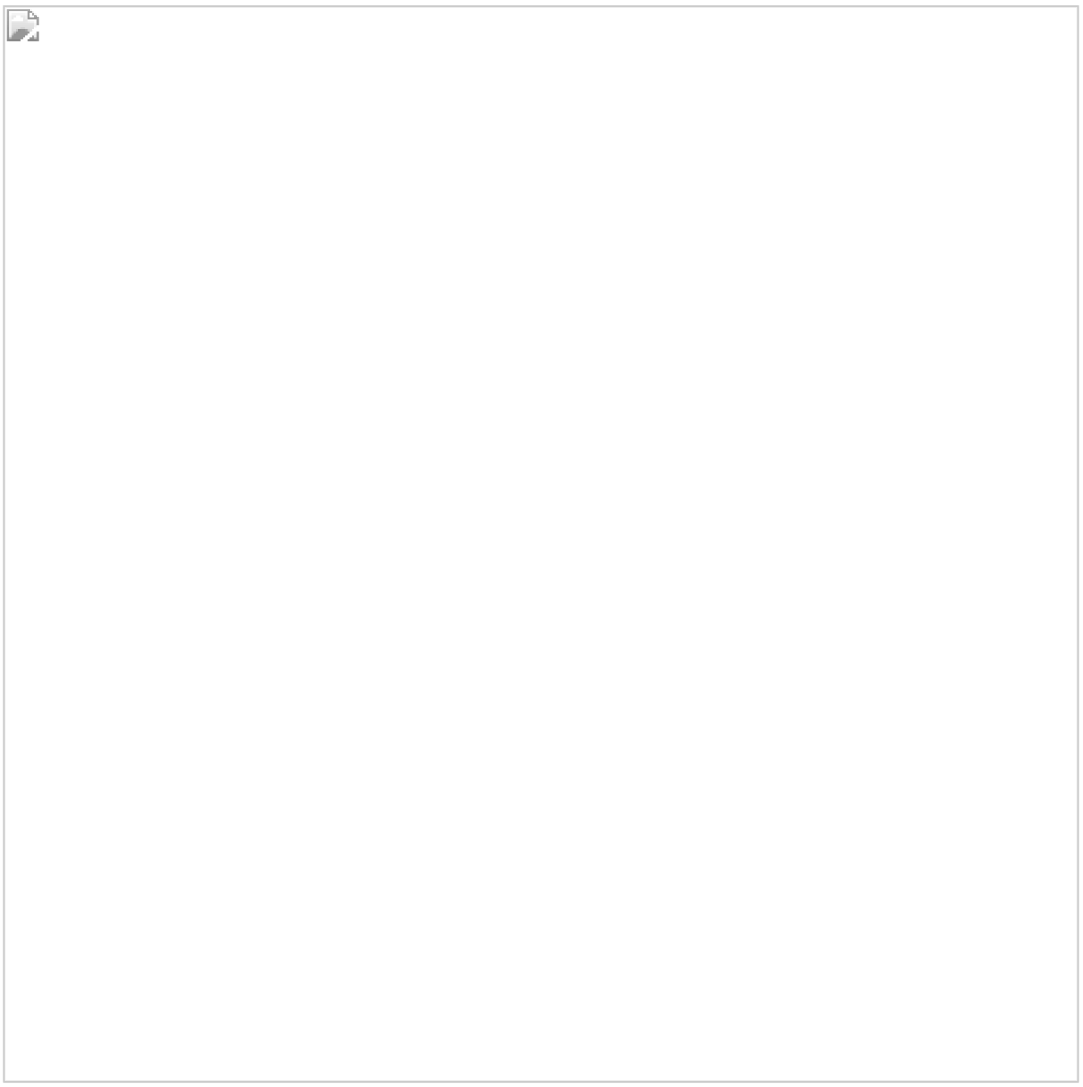
When he dropped it on the grass, the staff opened its wings and hopped over to lean against the wall all by itself!

“I am called Mercury,” he said, “because I am so quick.”

The older traveler was tall and calm. When Philemon asked his name, Mercury only laughed: “You must ask the thunder to tell you that.”

TALK ABOUT IT

Who do you think these two strangers might really be? What makes you think so?

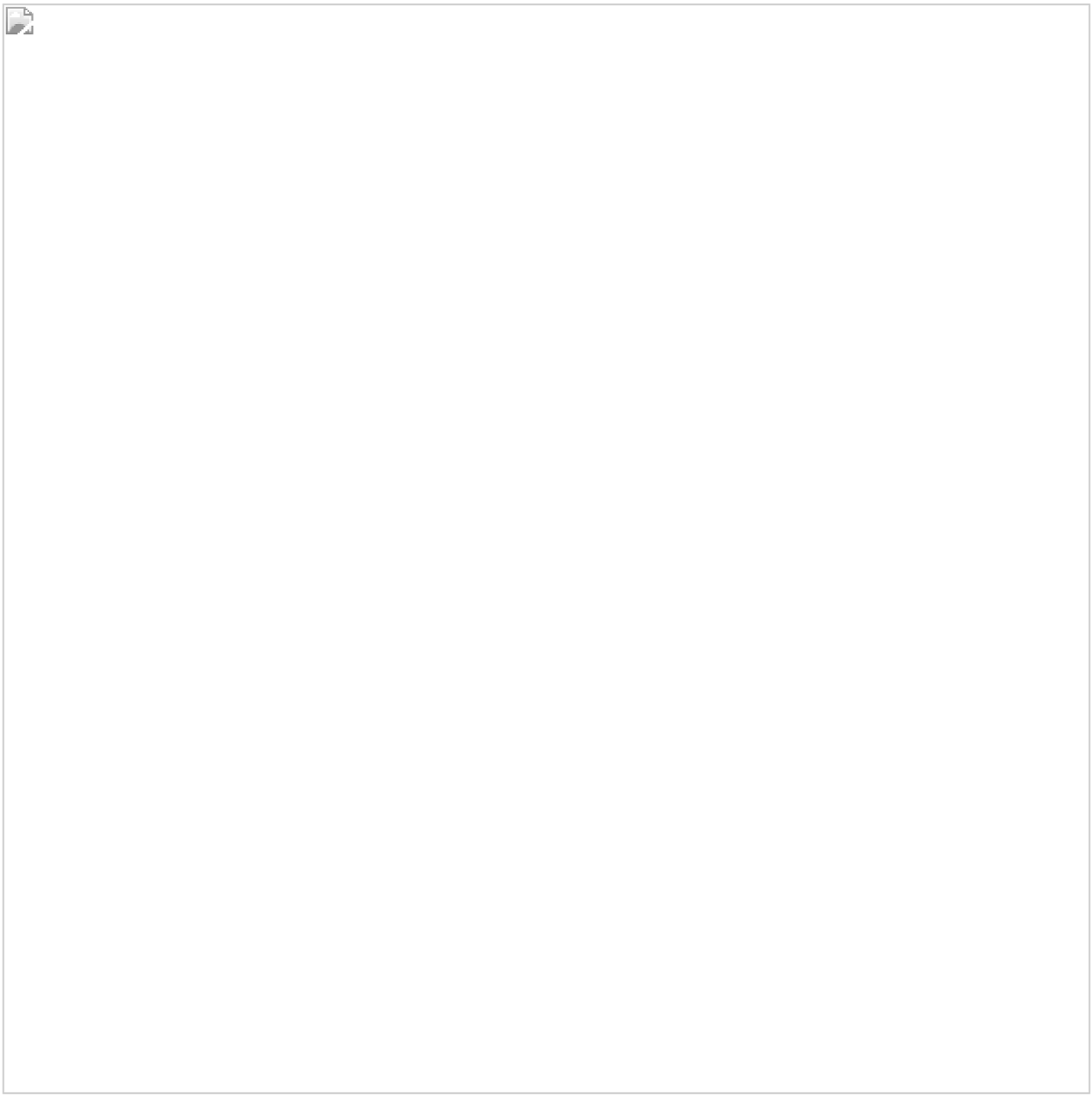


Think about it

1. What did Mercury's staff do?

- ○ It sang a song
- ○ It hopped and flew by itself
- ○ It turned into a tree

A Small Supper



Supper was not much: half a brown loaf, a bit of cheese, a pitcher of milk, a little honey and a bunch of purple grapes.

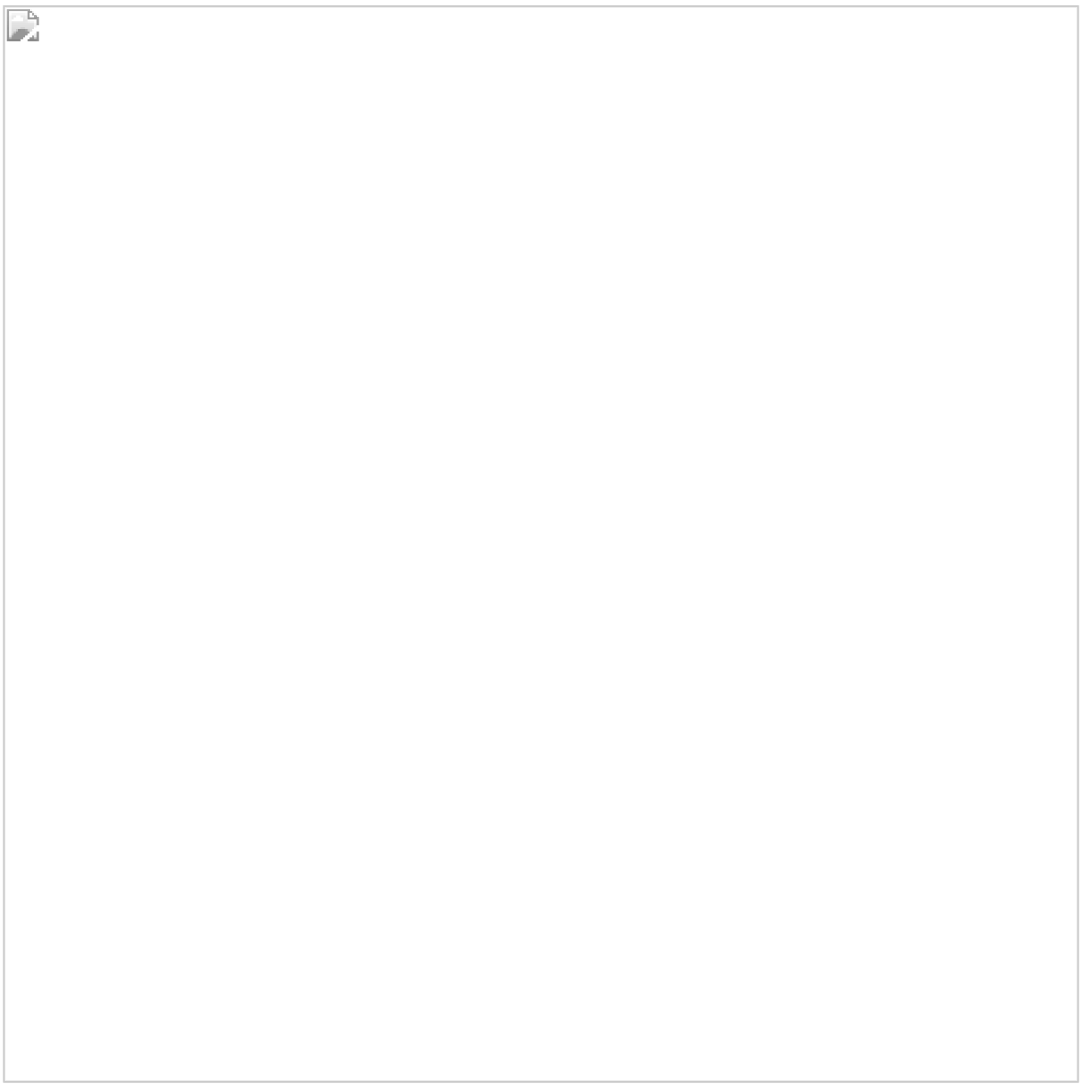
“Had we only known you were coming,” said Baucis, she and Philemon would have gone without, to give their guests something better.

But the older stranger smiled. “A hearty welcome is better than the finest of food.”

TALK ABOUT IT

The stranger said a warm welcome is better than fancy food. Do you agree? Why?

A Small Supper · another picture

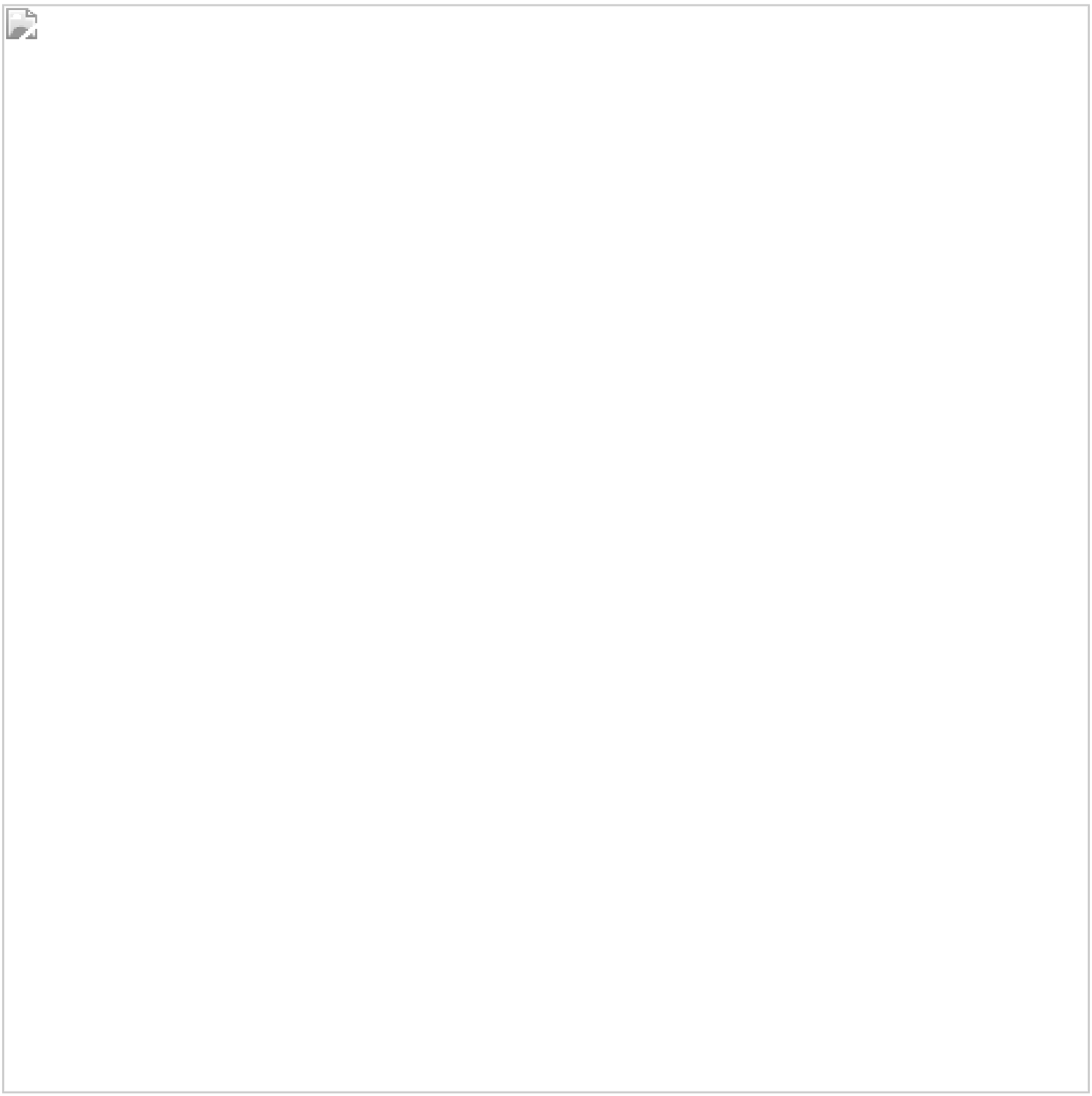


Think about it

1. What did the stranger say was better than the finest food?

- ○ A soft bed
- ○ A hearty welcome
- ○ A full purse

The Pitcher That Never Ran Dry



Mercury drank his milk and asked for more. “There is hardly another drop,” said Baucis sadly.

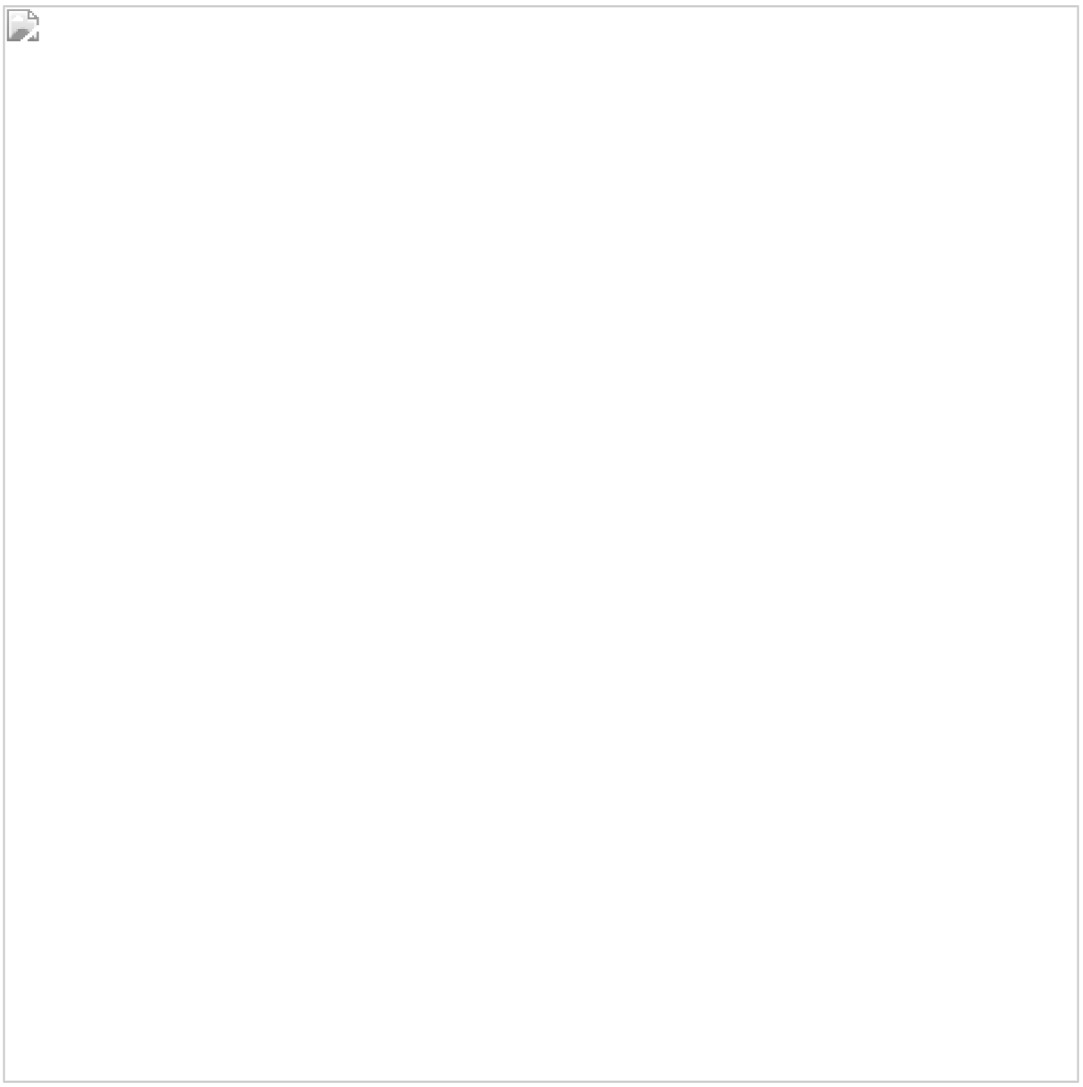
But when Mercury lifted the pitcher, there was more. And when Baucis tipped it upside down to show it was empty, a stream of fresh milk came bubbling out!

The hard old bread turned soft as if fresh from the oven. The honey turned the color of new gold, and the grapes grew big and juicy.

Then Philemon looked in the empty pitcher himself, and a little white fountain of milk filled it to the brim.

TALK ABOUT IT

Baucis and Philemon gave what little they had, and then there was more than enough. What do you think that means?

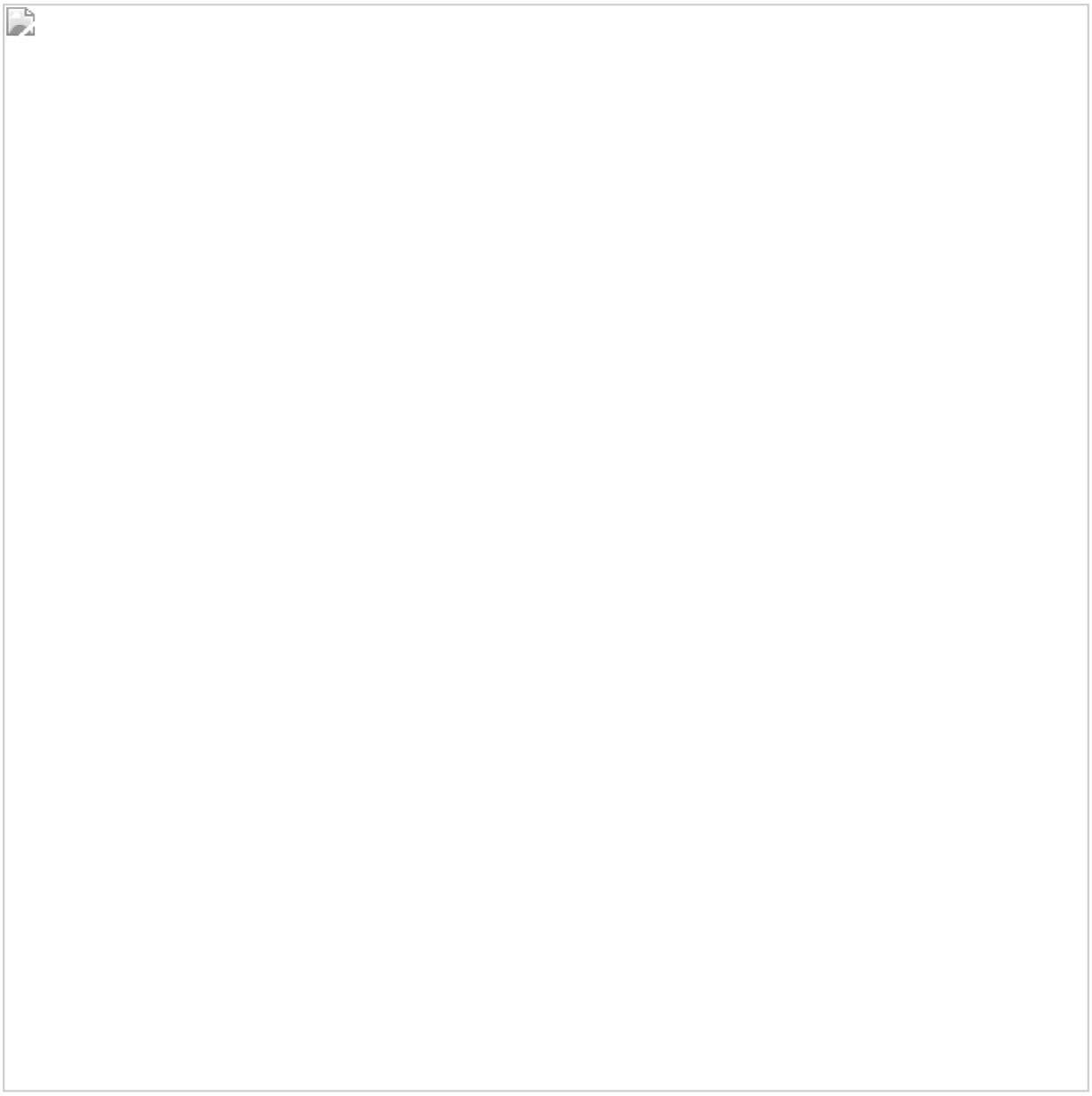


Think about it

1. What happened when Baucis tipped the pitcher upside down?

- ○ Nothing came out
- ○ Fresh milk came bubbling out
- ○ Water spilled on the floor

Beds for the Guests



“Who are ye, wonder-working strangers?” cried Philemon.

“Your guests, good Philemon, and your friends,” said the older traveler.

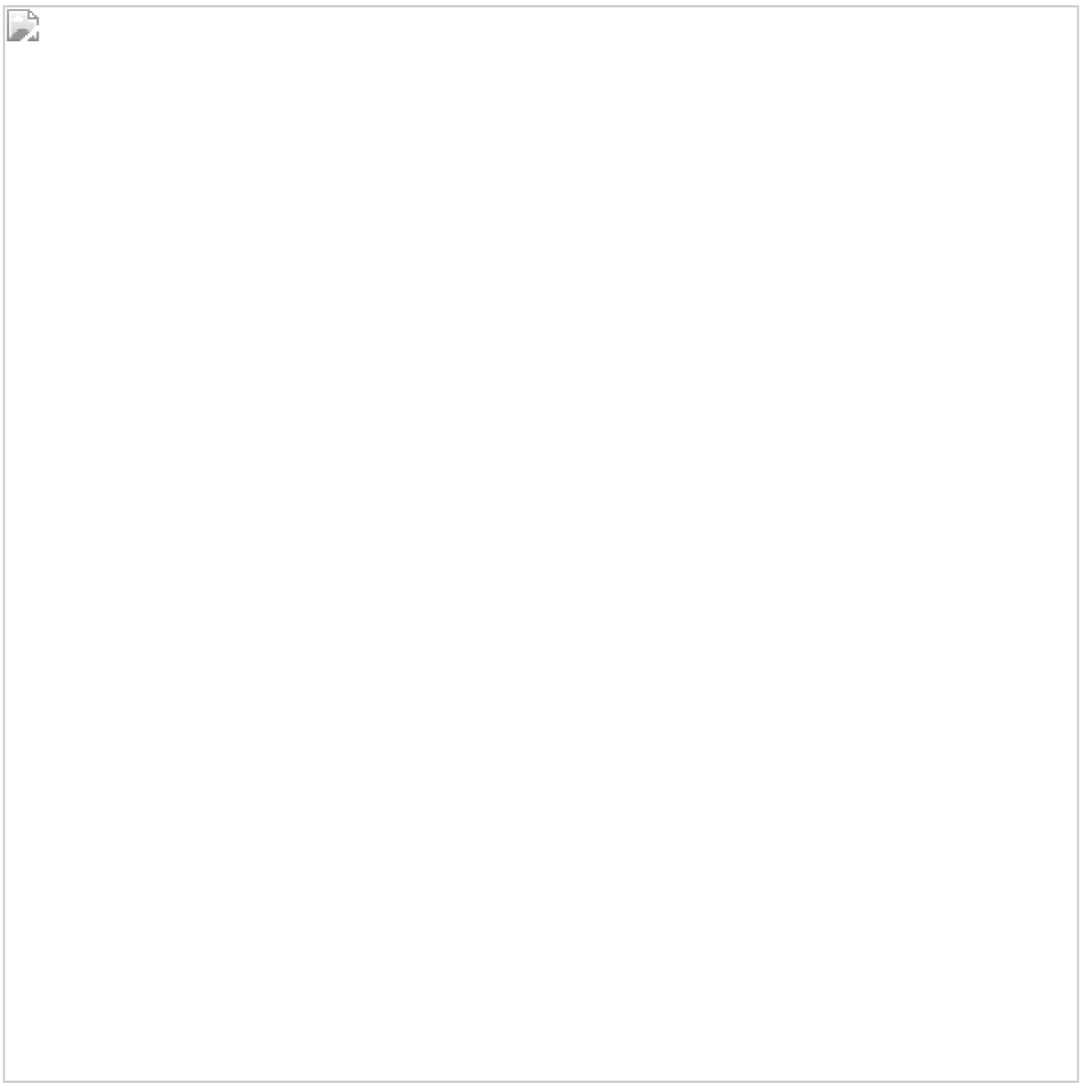
That night the old couple gave the strangers their own bed, and they lay down on the hard kitchen floor.

They hardly slept, but not because the floor was hard. They had too much to whisper about!

TALK ABOUT IT

Baucis and Philemon gave up their own bed. What is something you could give up to make someone else comfortable?

Beds for the Guests · another picture

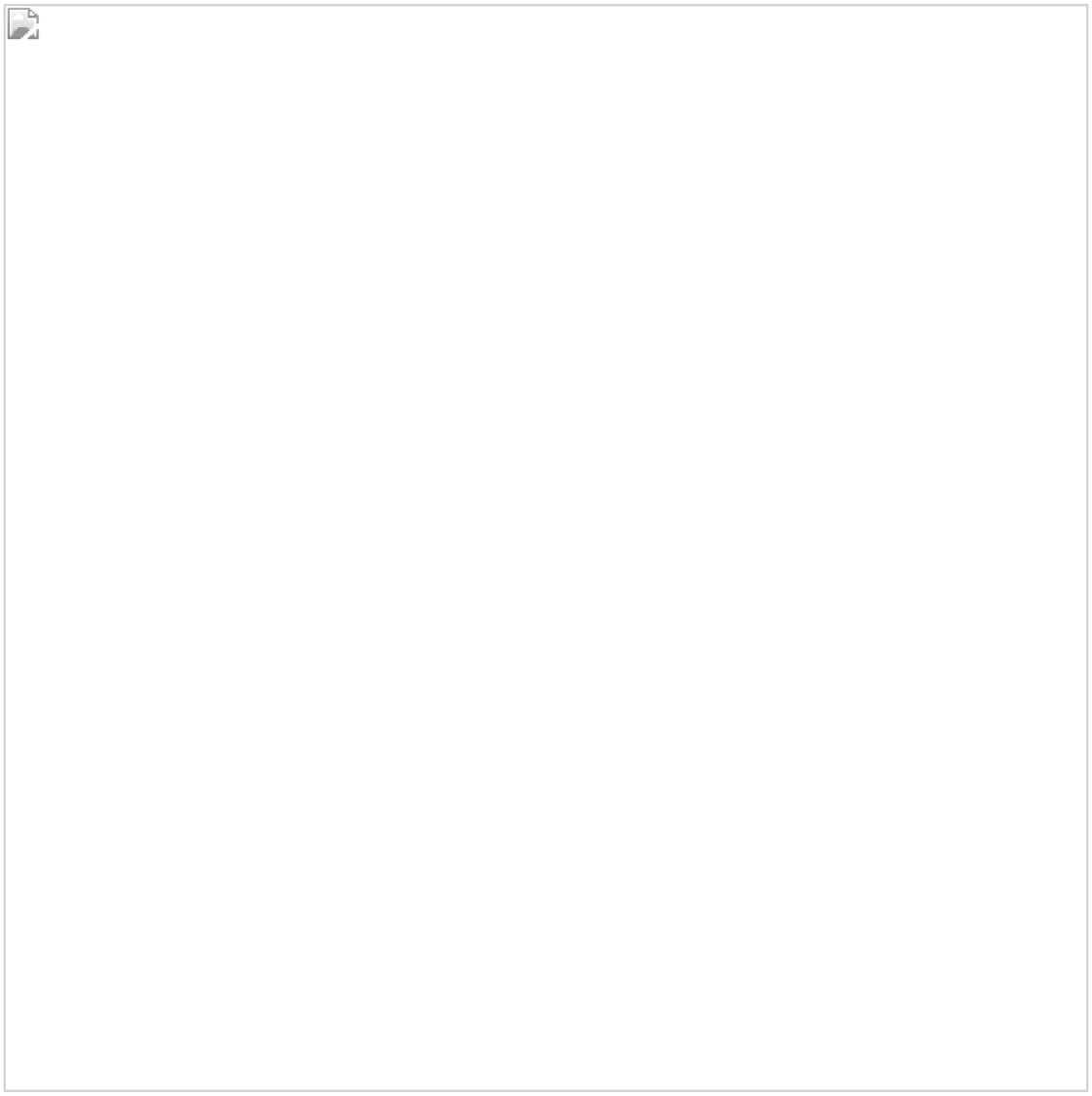


Think about it

1. Where did Baucis and Philemon sleep that night?

- ○ In their own bed
- ○ On the kitchen floor
- ○ In the village

Where the Village Had Been



In the morning, the old couple walked a little way with their guests to show them the road.

The older traveler's face grew grave. People who do not treat the poorest stranger like a brother, he said, have forgotten what the earth is for. It was made to be a home for the whole human family.

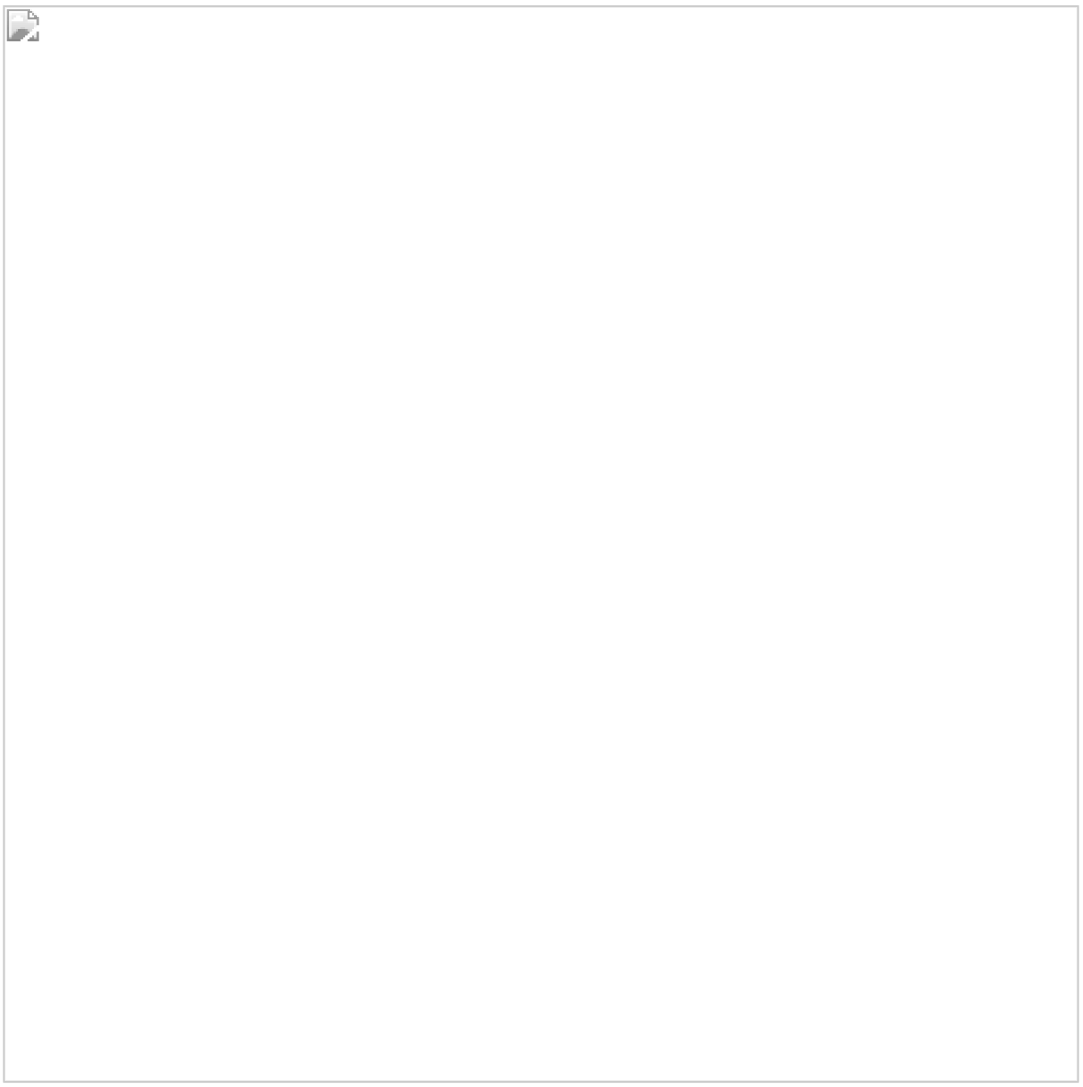
Baucis and Philemon looked down at the valley. The village was gone. A wide, sparkling lake filled the valley from brim to brim.

The cold-hearted villagers had become fish, the strangers said, for their hearts had never been warm.

TALK ABOUT IT

Why do you think the stranger was so sad and stern about the village?

Where the Village Had Been · another picture



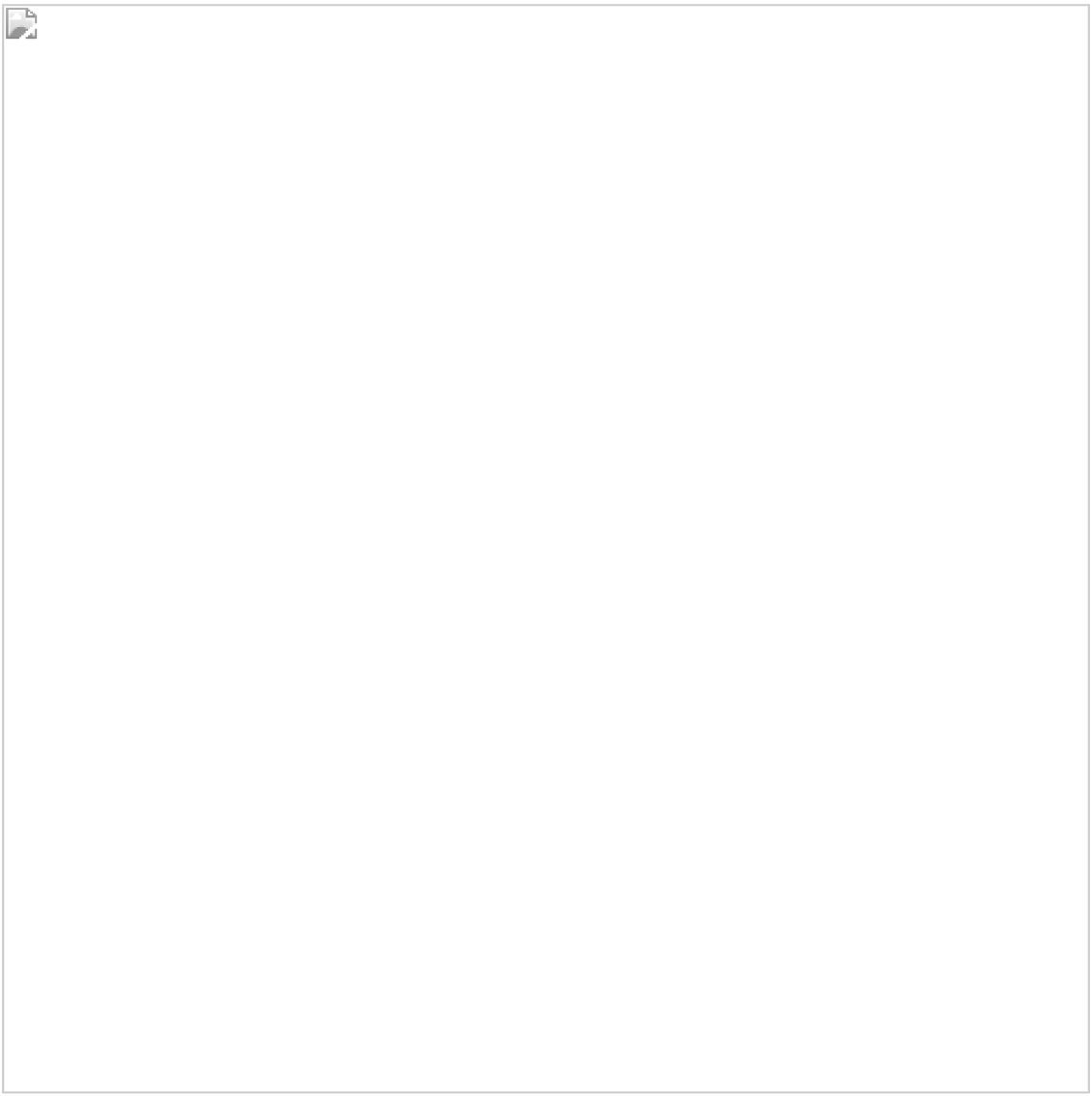
Think about it

1. What did Baucis and Philemon see where the village had been?

- ○ A big castle
- ○ A wide lake
- ○ A forest

2. Baucis and Philemon cried out for their neighbors, even though the neighbors had been unkind. What does that tell you about them?

One Wish



“You, indeed, gave a hearty welcome to the homeless strangers,” said the older traveler. “Whatever wish you have most at heart will be granted.”

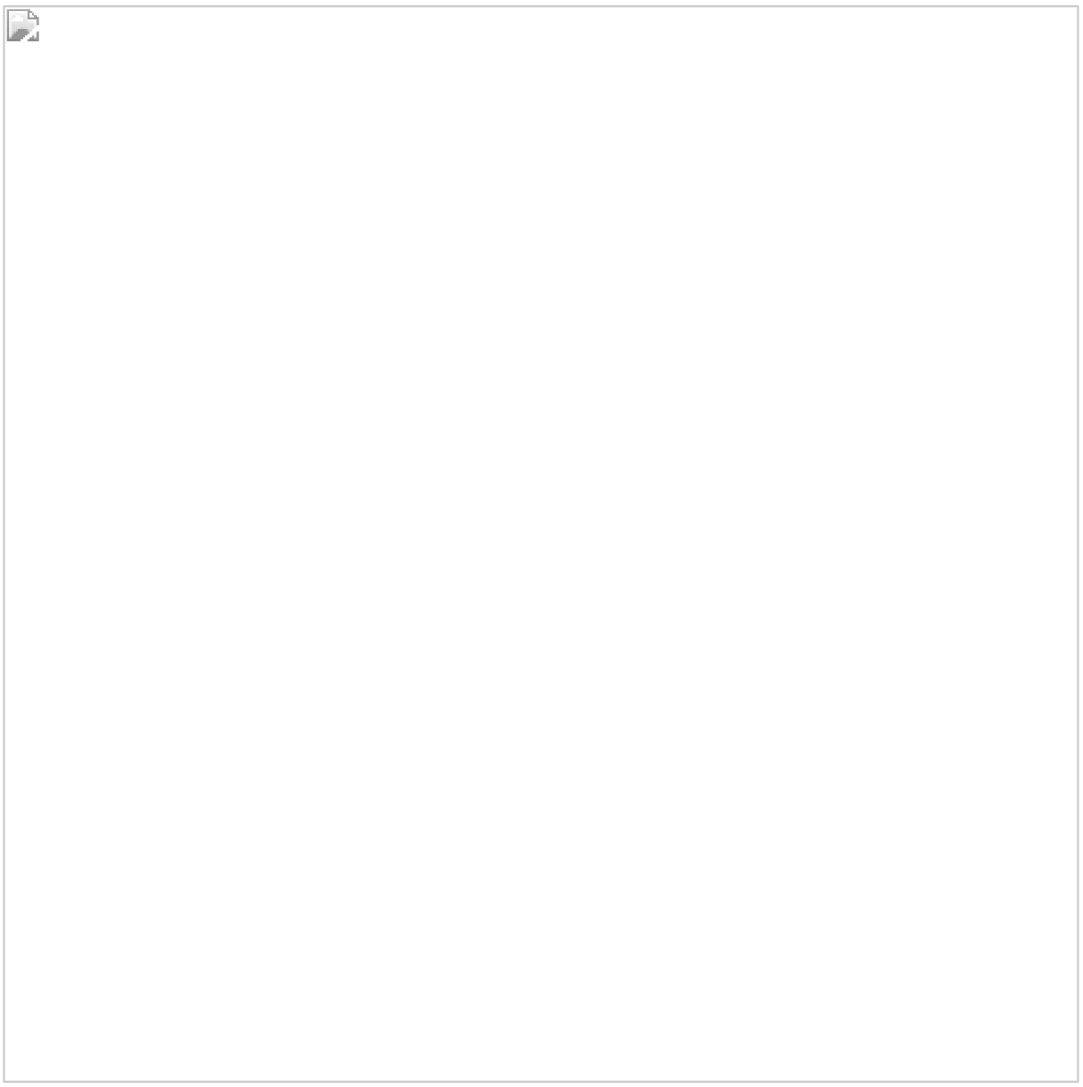
Baucis and Philemon looked at each other. They did not ask for gold or a big house.

Together they said, “Let us live together while we live, and let us die together,” for they had always loved one another.

“Be it so,” said the stranger. And when they looked up again, the two travelers were gone.

TALK ABOUT IT

Baucis and Philemon could have wished for anything. Why do you think they wished to stay together?

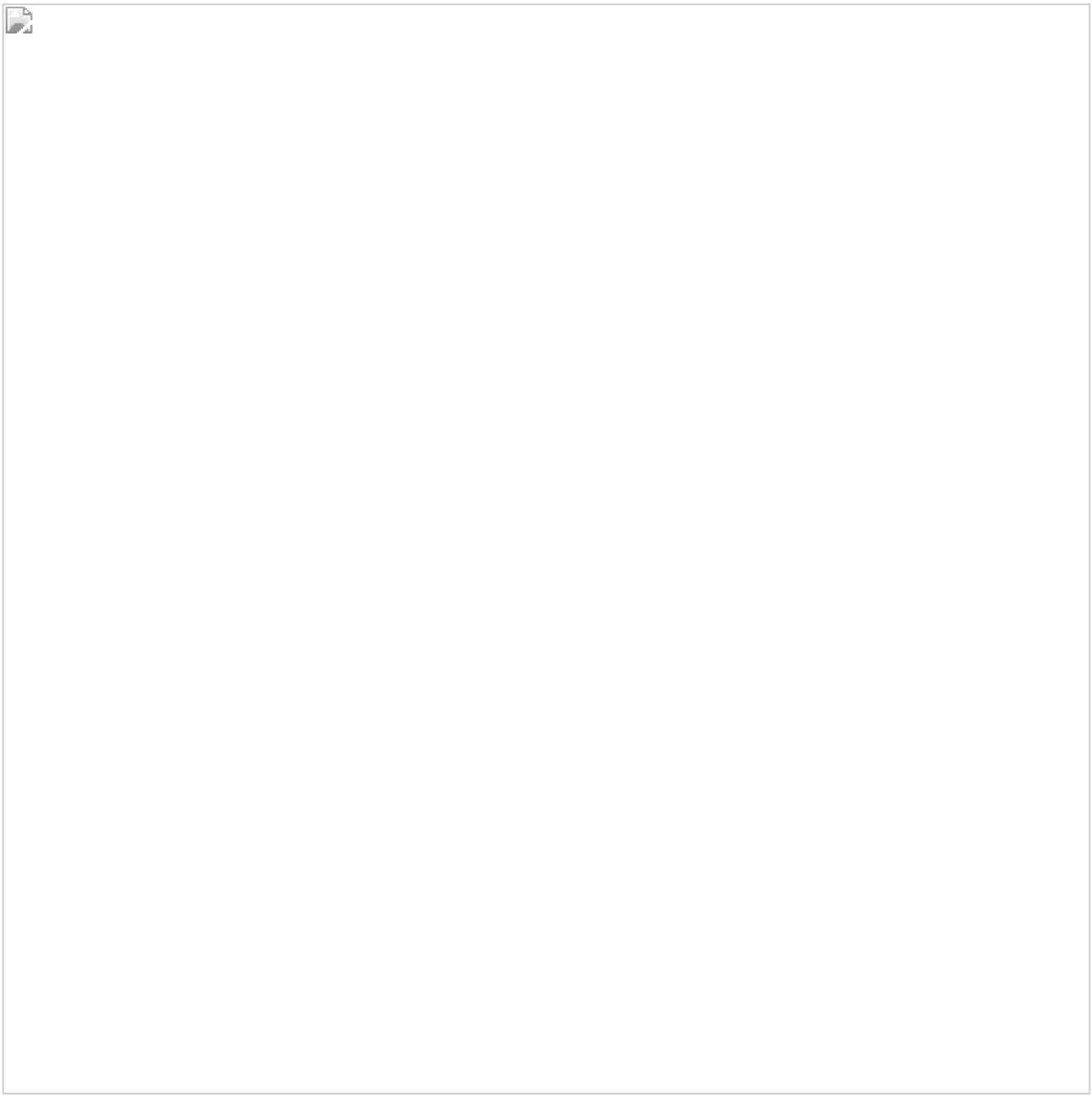


Think about it

1. What did Baucis and Philemon wish for?

- ○ A big house
- ○ A bag of gold
- ○ To always be together

Milk for Every Traveler



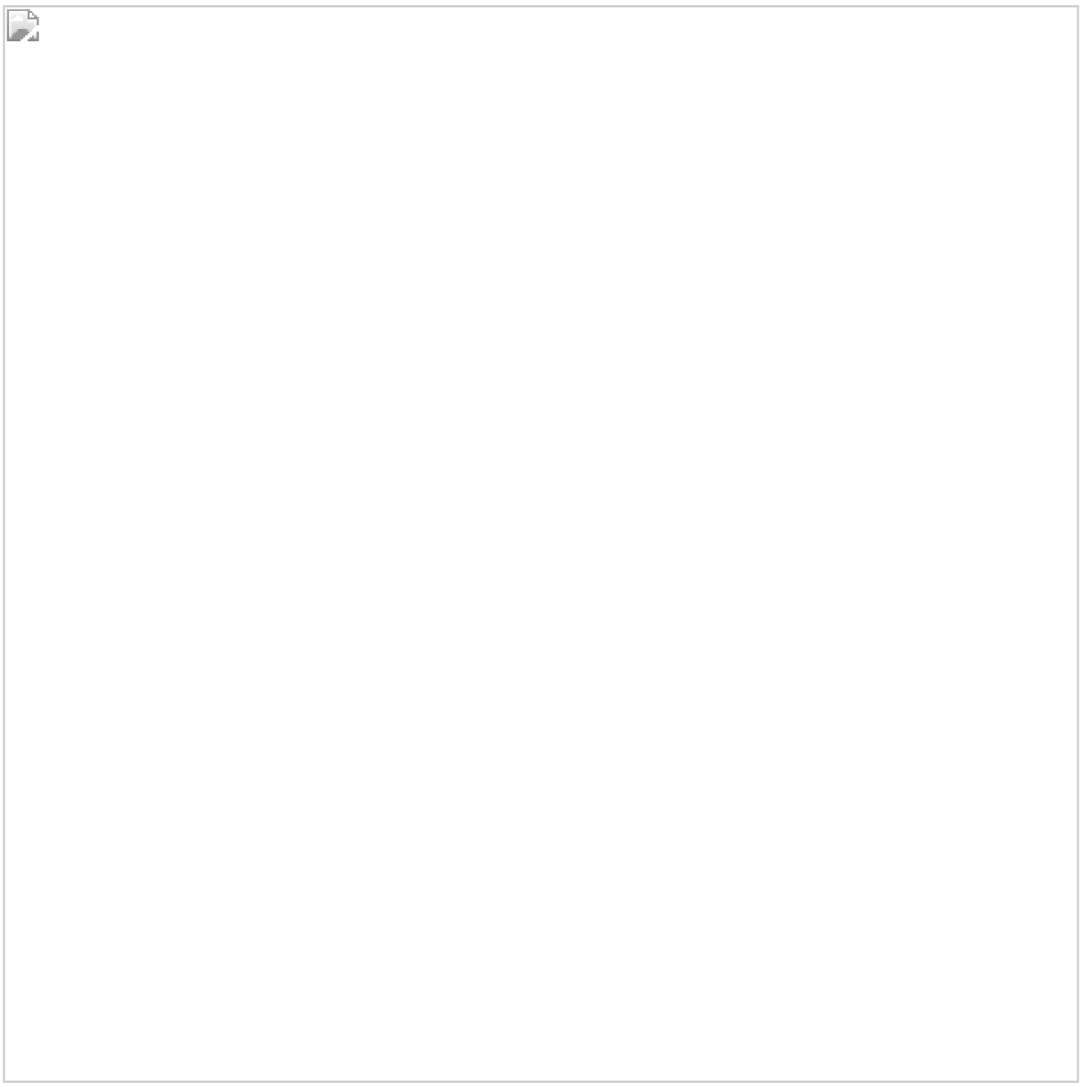
From then on, Baucis and Philemon gave every traveler a drink from the wonderful pitcher.

A kind, gentle guest found the milk the sweetest they had ever tasted.

But if a cross, grumpy fellow took a sip, the milk turned sour in his mouth!

TALK ABOUT IT

Why do you think the milk tasted sweet to kind people and sour to grumpy ones?

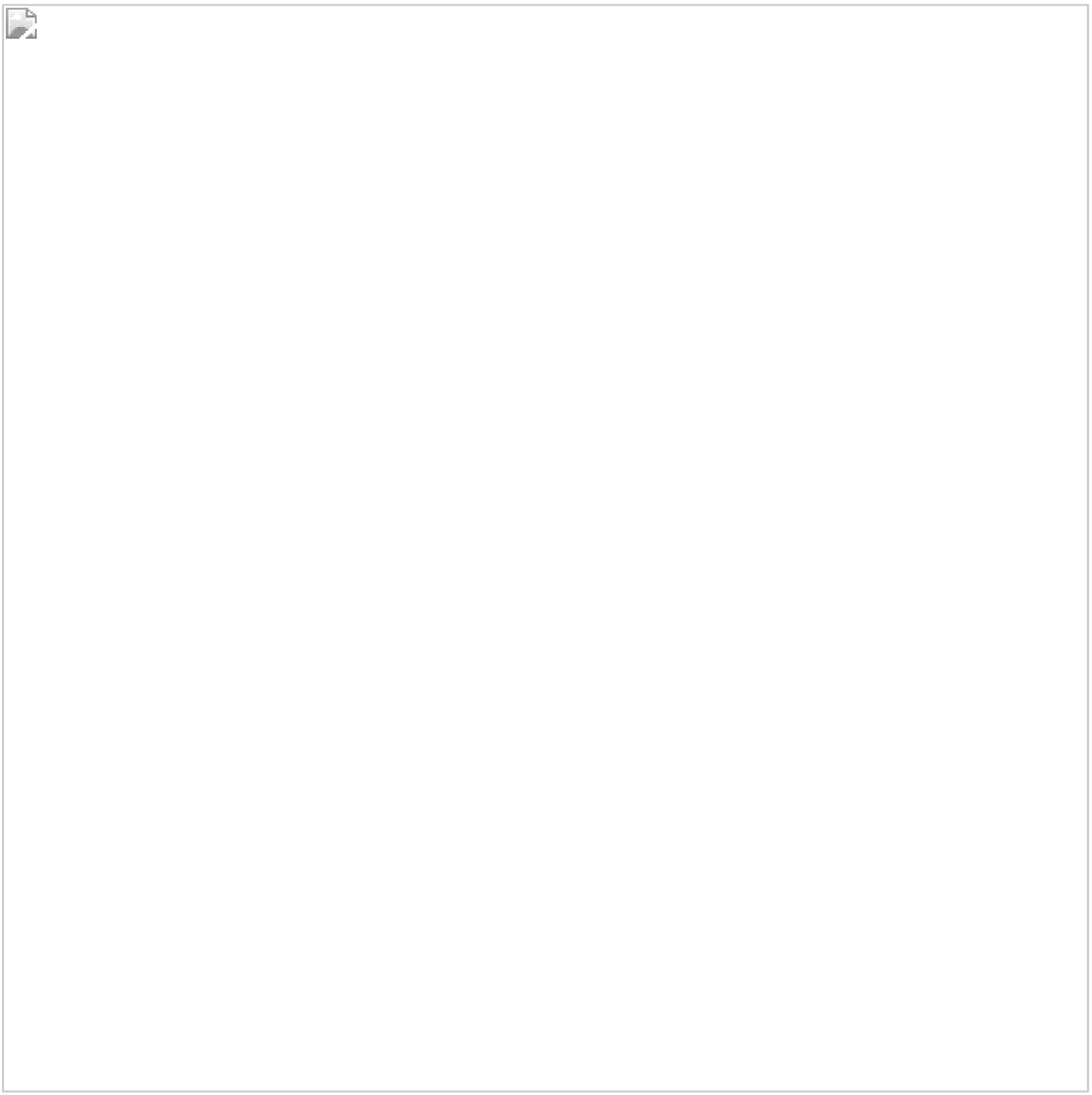


Think about it

1. Who tasted the sweetest milk?

- ○ Cross, grumpy guests
- ○ Kind, gentle guests
- ○ Only Mercury

Two Trees by the Door



Baucis and Philemon lived a great many years. Then one summer morning, their friends came to breakfast and could not find them.

Instead, by the door stood two beautiful trees that no one had ever seen before: an oak and a linden, with their branches twined together like a hug.

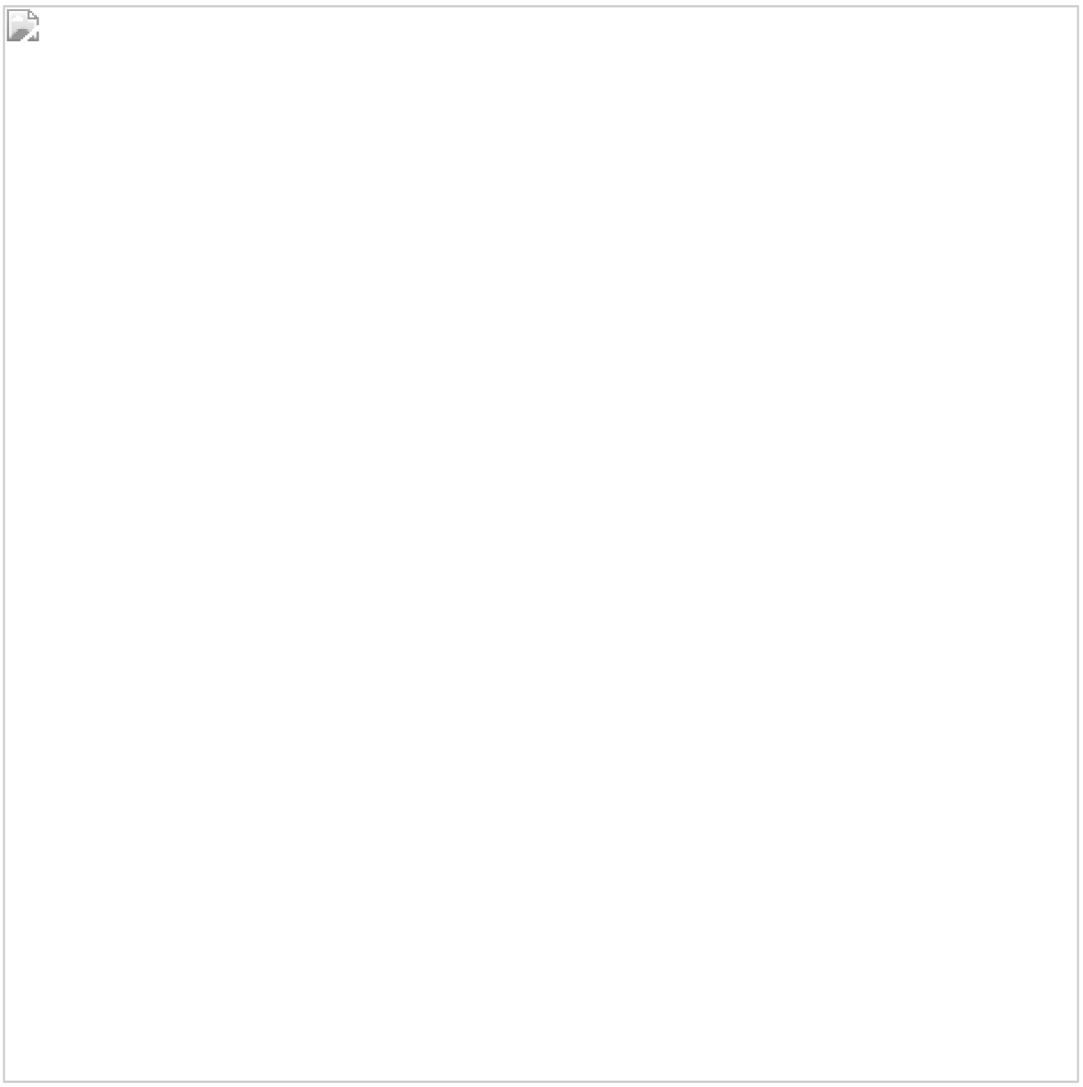
A soft wind blew. “I am old Philemon,” whispered the oak. “And I am Baucis,” whispered the linden.

Someone built a bench in their shade. And every tired traveler who sat there heard the leaves whisper, “Welcome, dear traveler, welcome.”

TALK ABOUT IT

An old book says that some people who welcomed strangers “have entertained angels unawares” (Hebrews 13:2). Who is someone you could welcome this week?

Two Trees by the Door · another picture



Think about it

1. What did Baucis and Philemon become?

- ○ Two birds
- ○ Two trees with branches twined together
- ○ Two stars

2. What did the leaves whisper to every tired traveler?

“There is no greater love than to lay down one’s life for one’s friends.”

— Yeshua HaMashiach

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