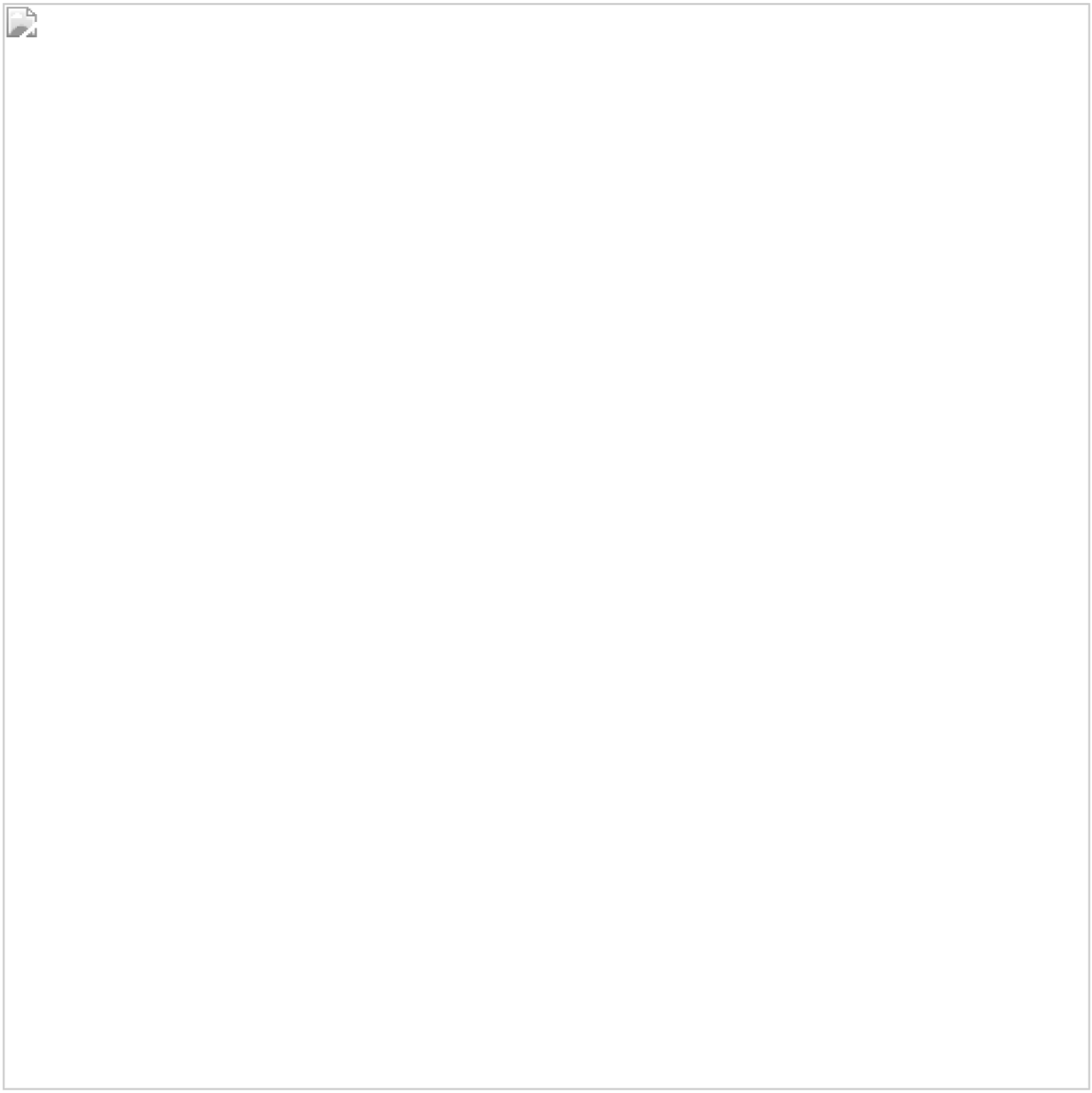
COLORING THE CLASSICS

Iktomi and the Muskrat

A Tale of the Dakota People



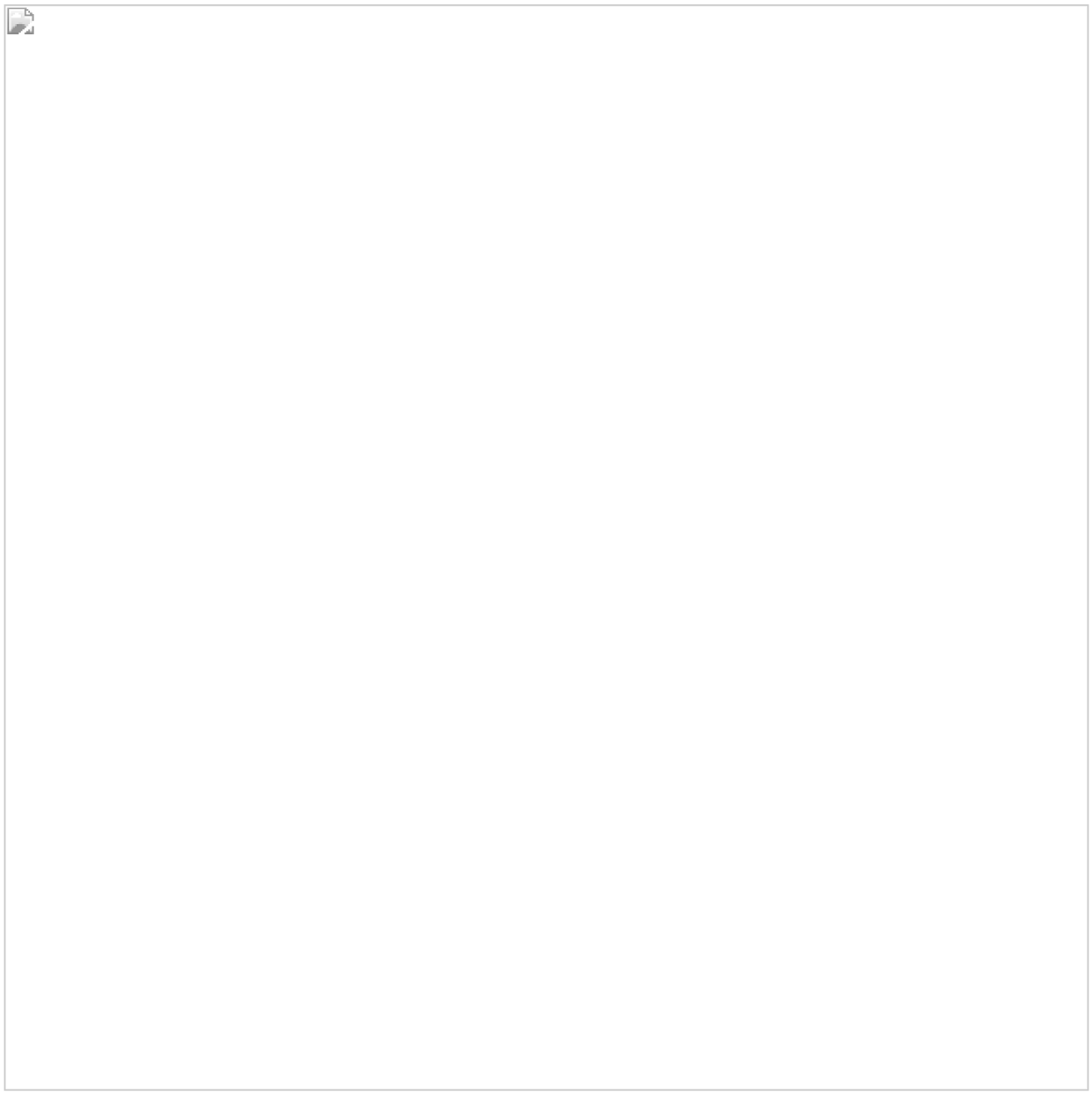
Beside a white lake, under a big willow tree, sat Iktomi on the bare ground. Next to him was a pot of soup full of boiled fish.

TALK ABOUT IT

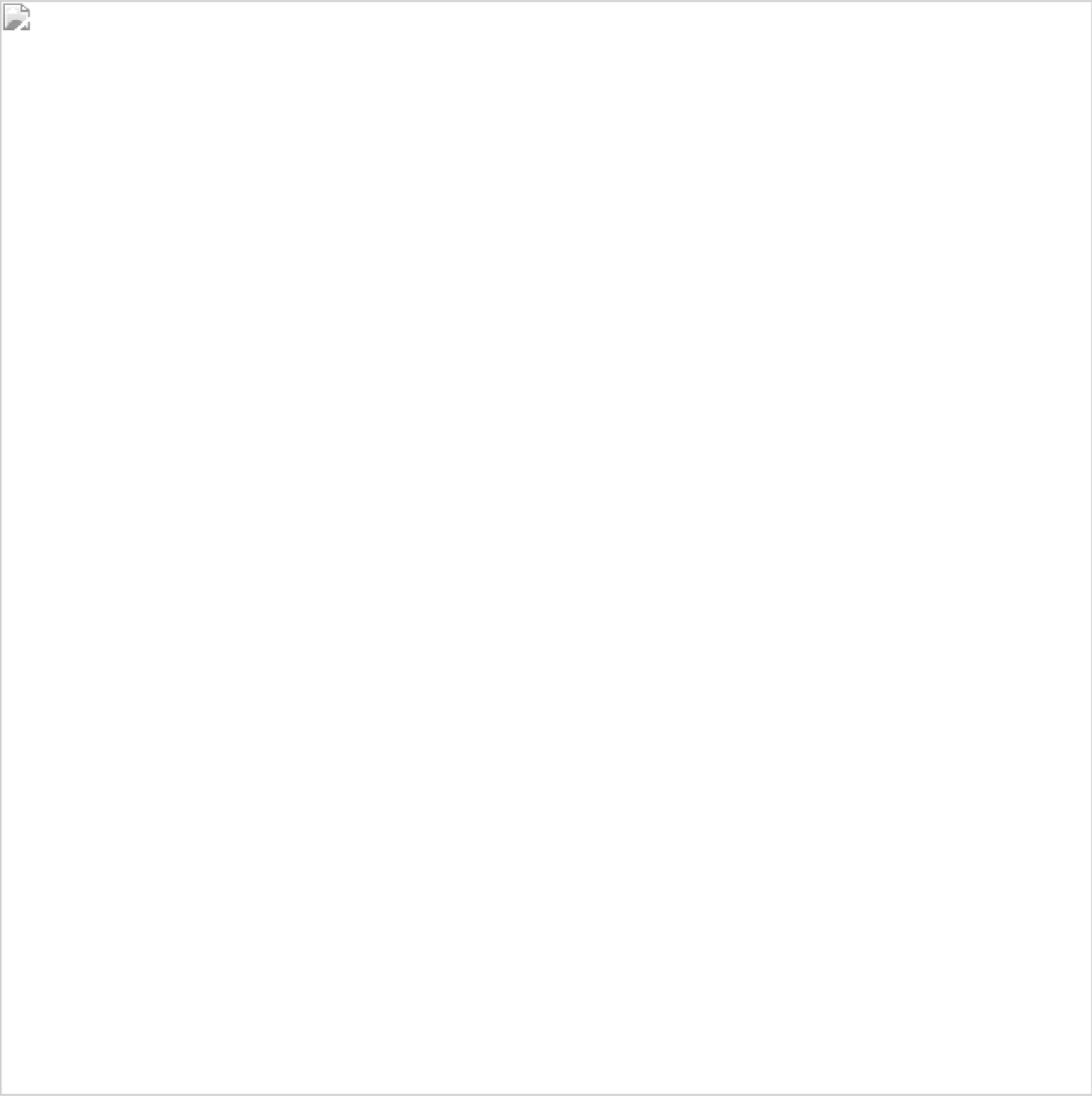
Iktomi had a pot of fish all to himself. What is your favorite food to eat?

This book belongs to _____

Iktomi and the Muskrat · another picture



A Pot of Fish

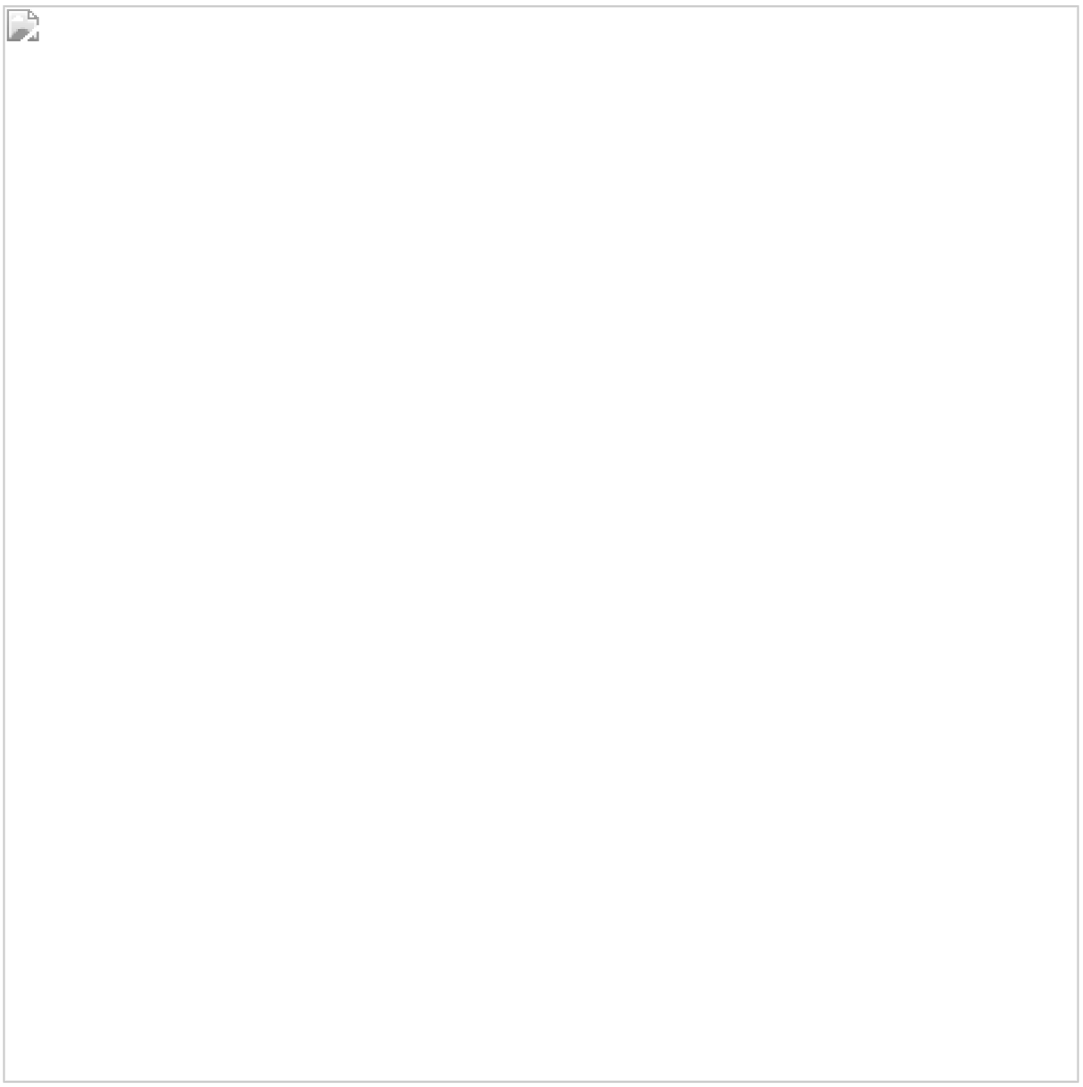


Iktomi dipped his black horn spoon into the soup, fast, fast, for he was ravenous. He sat hidden between the lake and the wild rice, looking at nothing but the pot.

He did not know when his next meal would be. So he meant to eat enough now to last a long time.

TALK ABOUT IT

Iktomi was very hungry. What do you do when you are very hungry?

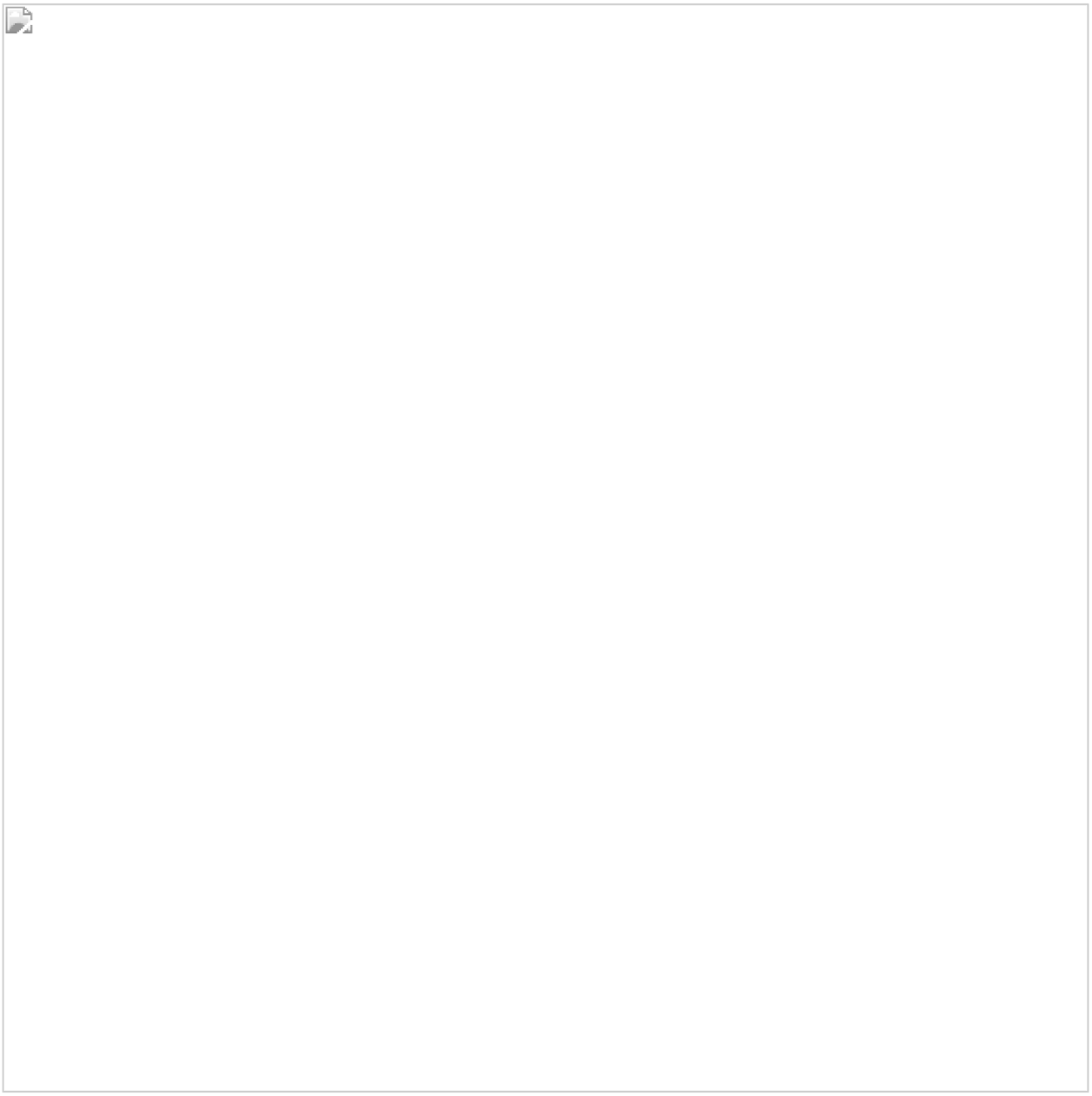


Think about it

1. Where was Iktomi sitting?

- ○ Under a willow tree by a lake
- ○ On top of a hill
- ○ Inside a teepee

A Voice in the Wild Rice



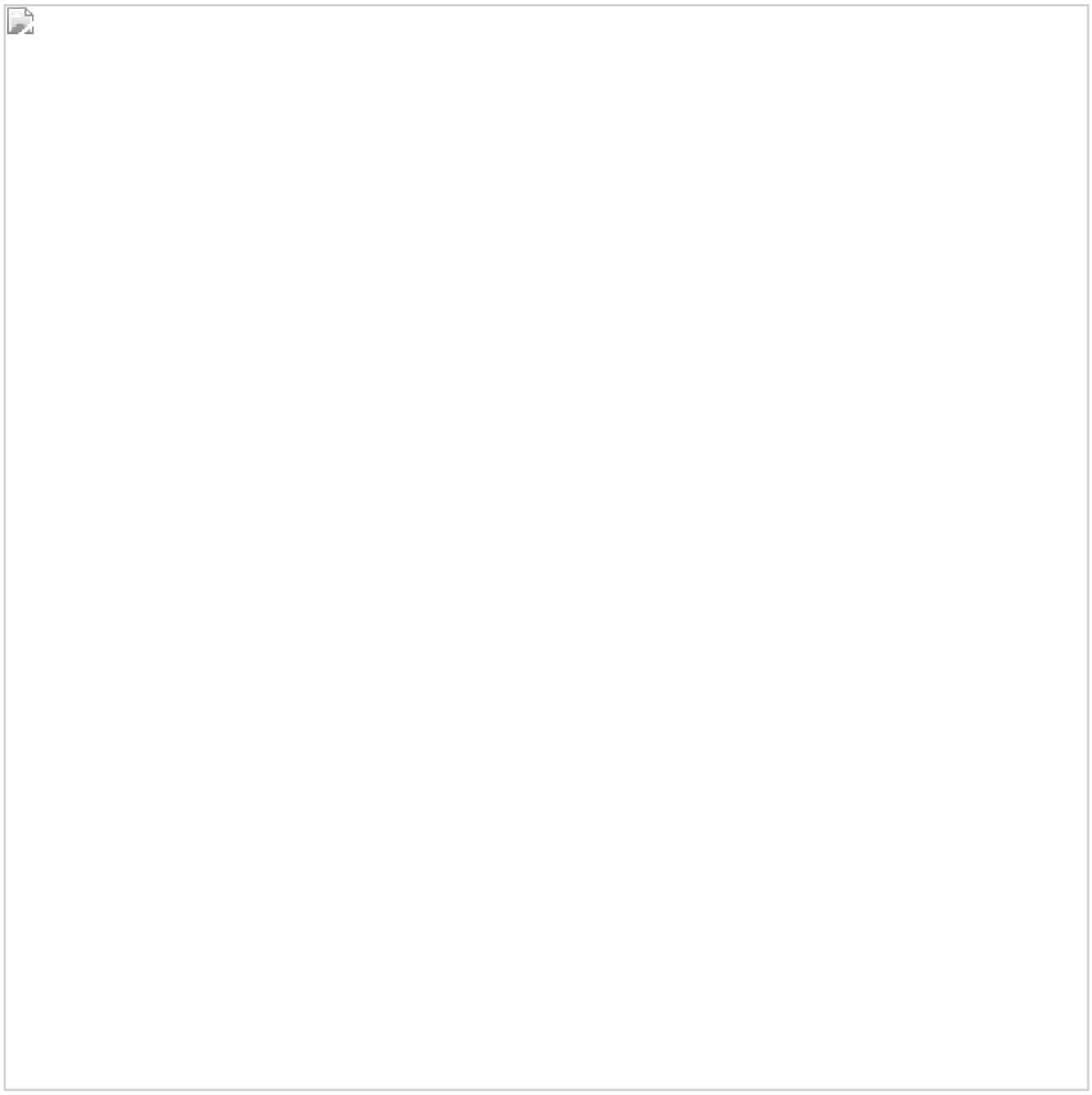
“How, how, my friend!” said a voice out of the wild rice. Iktomi almost choked on his soup.

“How, my friend!” said the voice again, close at his side. There stood a dripping muskrat, who had just come out of the lake.

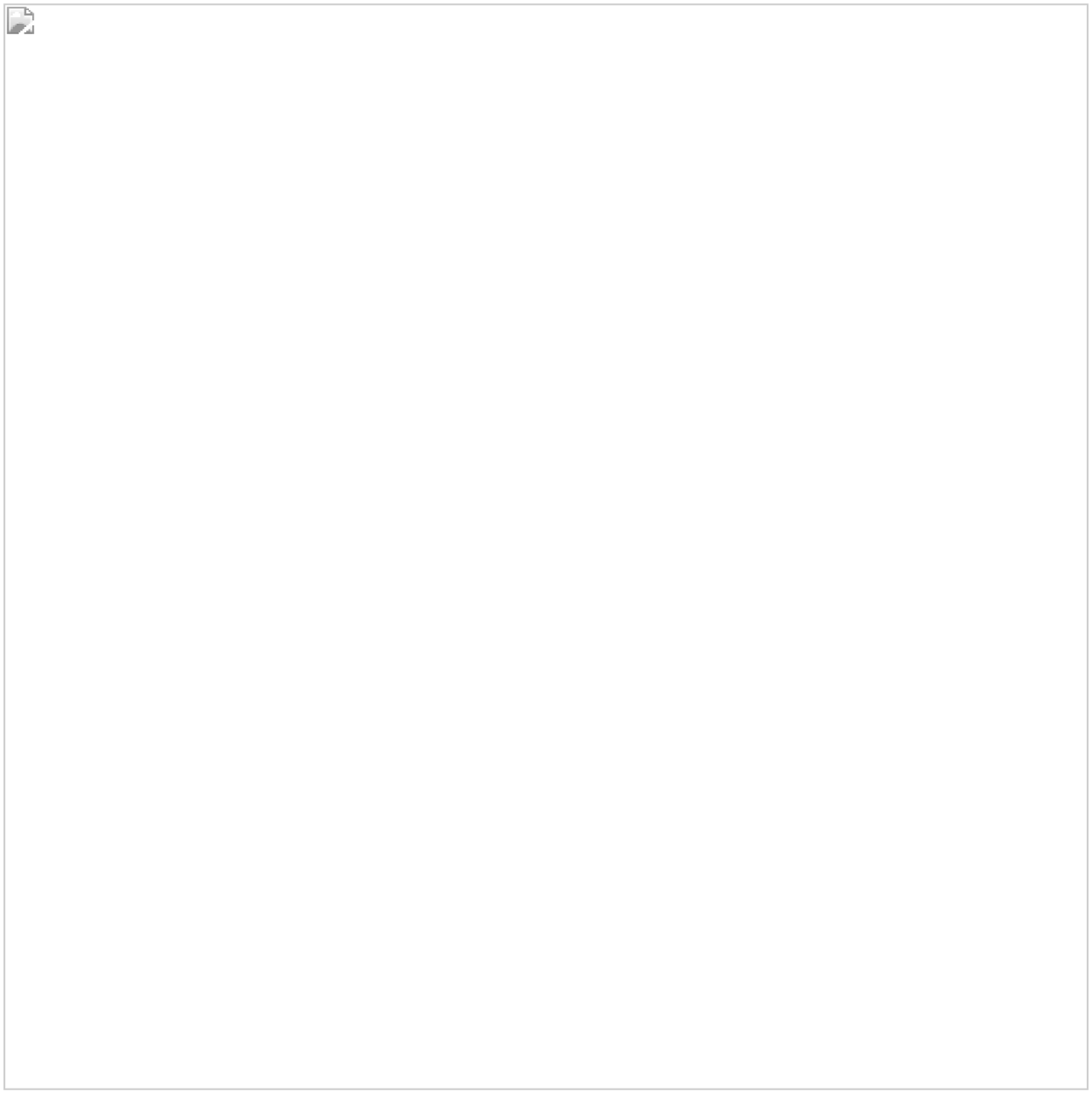
TALK ABOUT IT

Iktomi was startled by a voice out of nowhere. Has anything ever made you jump?

A Voice in the Wild Rice · another picture



The Custom of the Plains



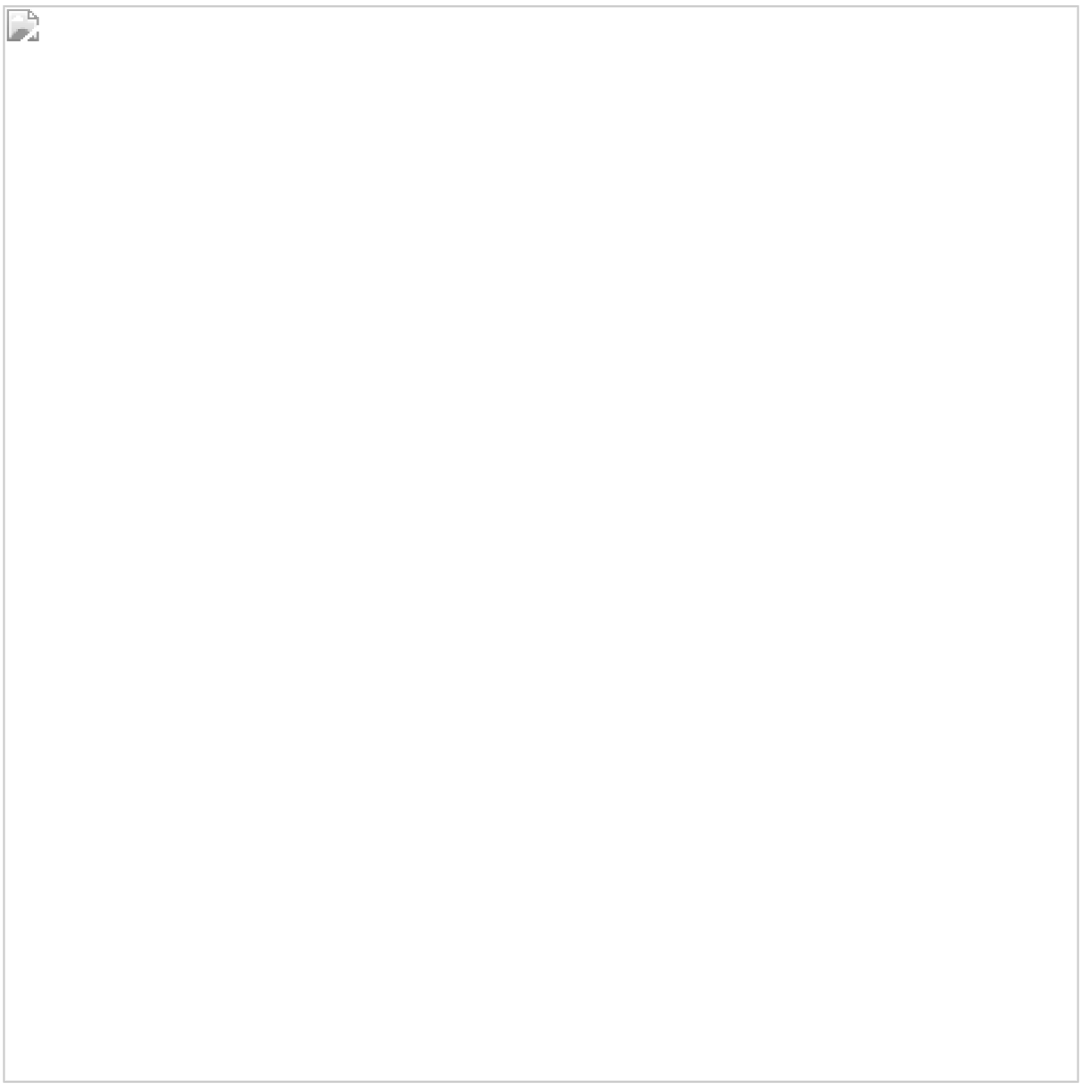
The muskrat stood smiling. He was ready to say, “Yes, my friend,” when Iktomi asked him to sit down and share his food.

That was the custom of the plains people. But Iktomi sat silent. He hummed an old dance-song and tapped his spoon on the edge of the pot.

The muskrat began to feel awkward. He wished himself back under the water.

TALK ABOUT IT

The muskrat was hoping to be asked to eat. What do you do when a visitor comes to your home?

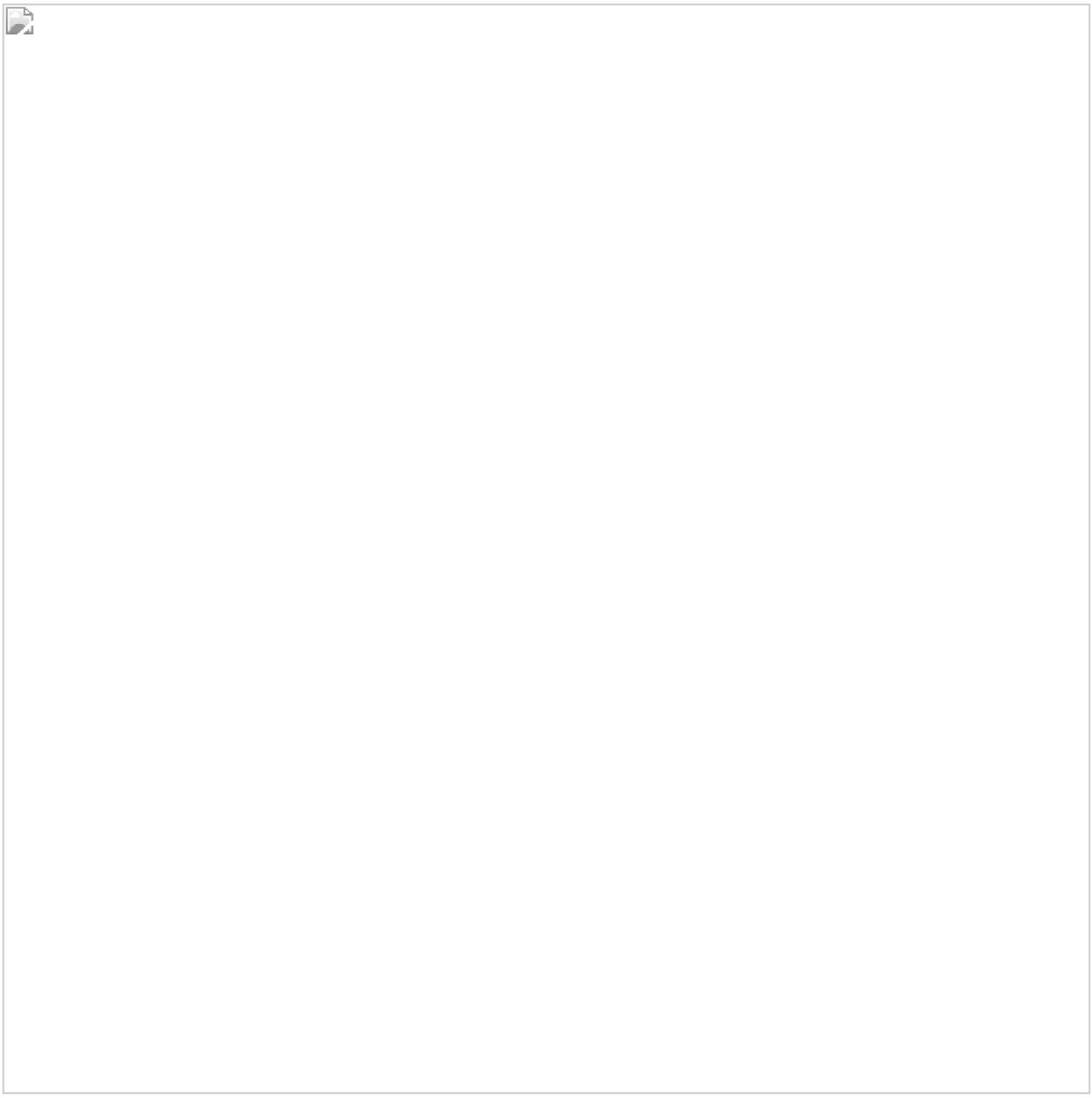


Think about it

1. What did Iktomi do while the muskrat stood waiting?

- ○ He offered him some fish
- ○ He hummed a song and tapped his spoon
- ○ He ran away

Let Us Run a Race



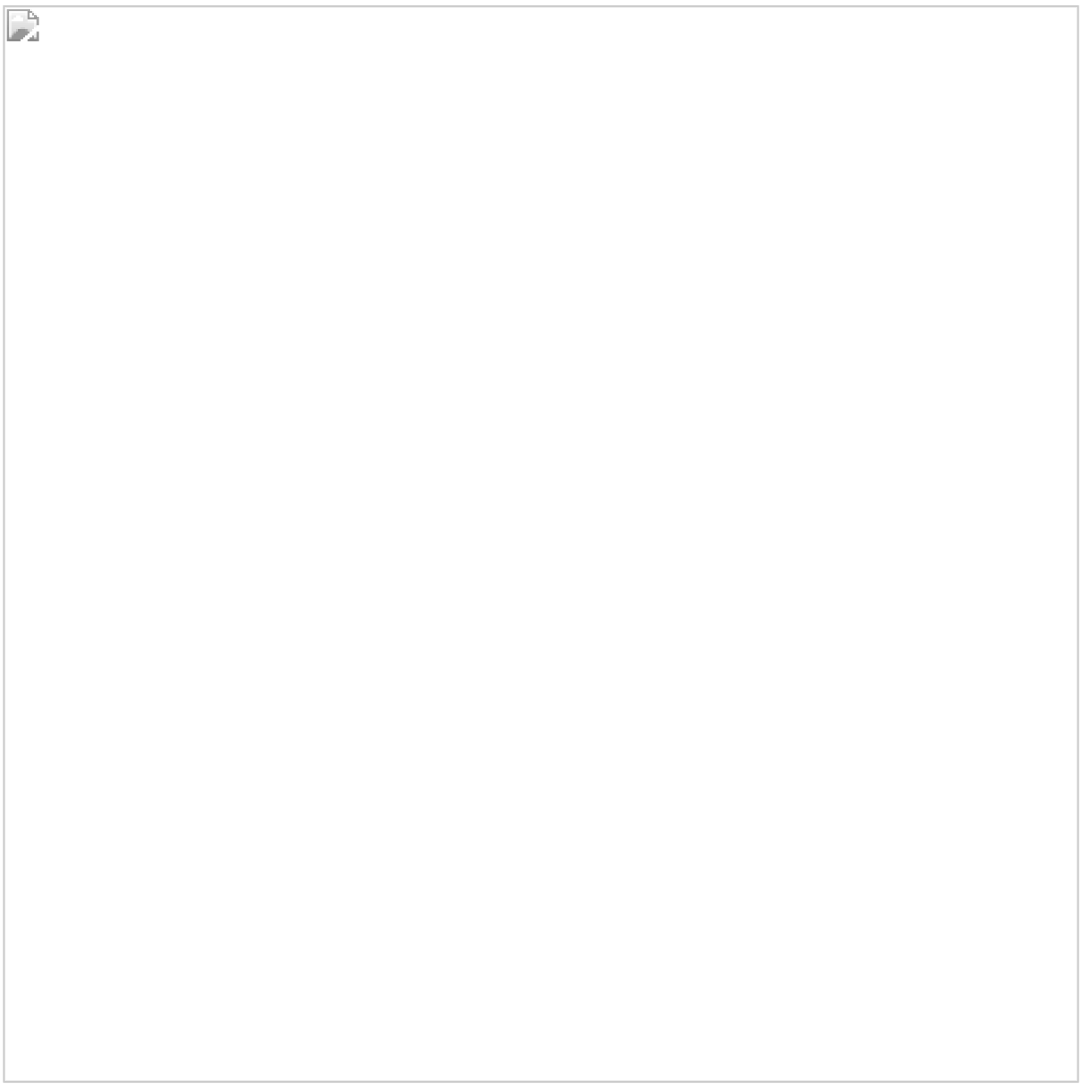
At last Iktomi looked up and said, “My friend, let us run a race to see who shall win this pot of fish.”

“If I win, I shall not need to share it with you. If you win, you shall have half of it.”

The muskrat said, “My friend Ikto, I cannot run a race with you!” He was not a swift runner, and Iktomi was nimble as a deer.

TALK ABOUT IT

Do you think this race sounded fair? Why or why not?

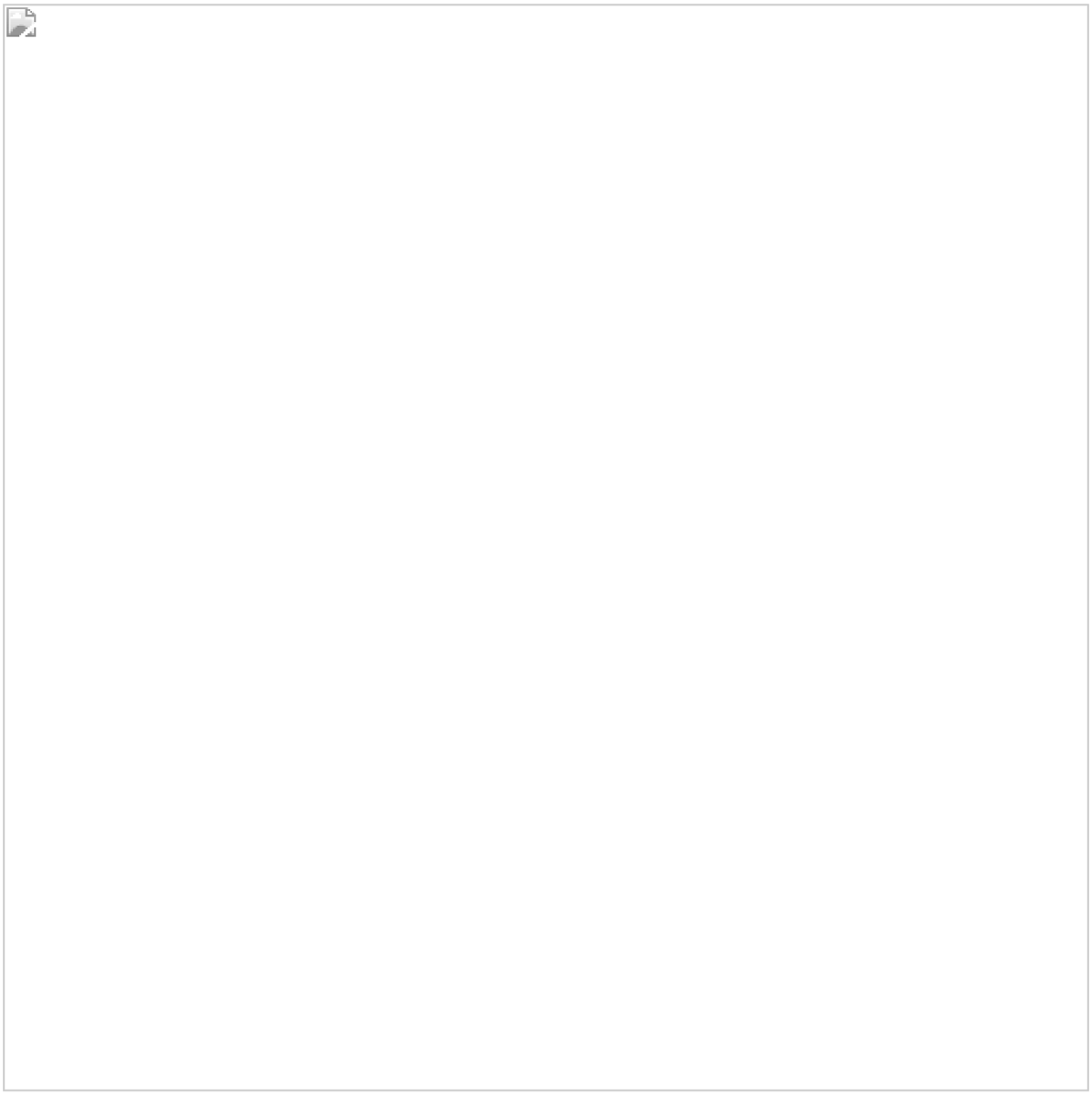


Think about it

1. What would the muskrat win if he won the race?

- ○ The whole pot
- ○ Half of the fish
- ○ Nothing

The Heavy Stone



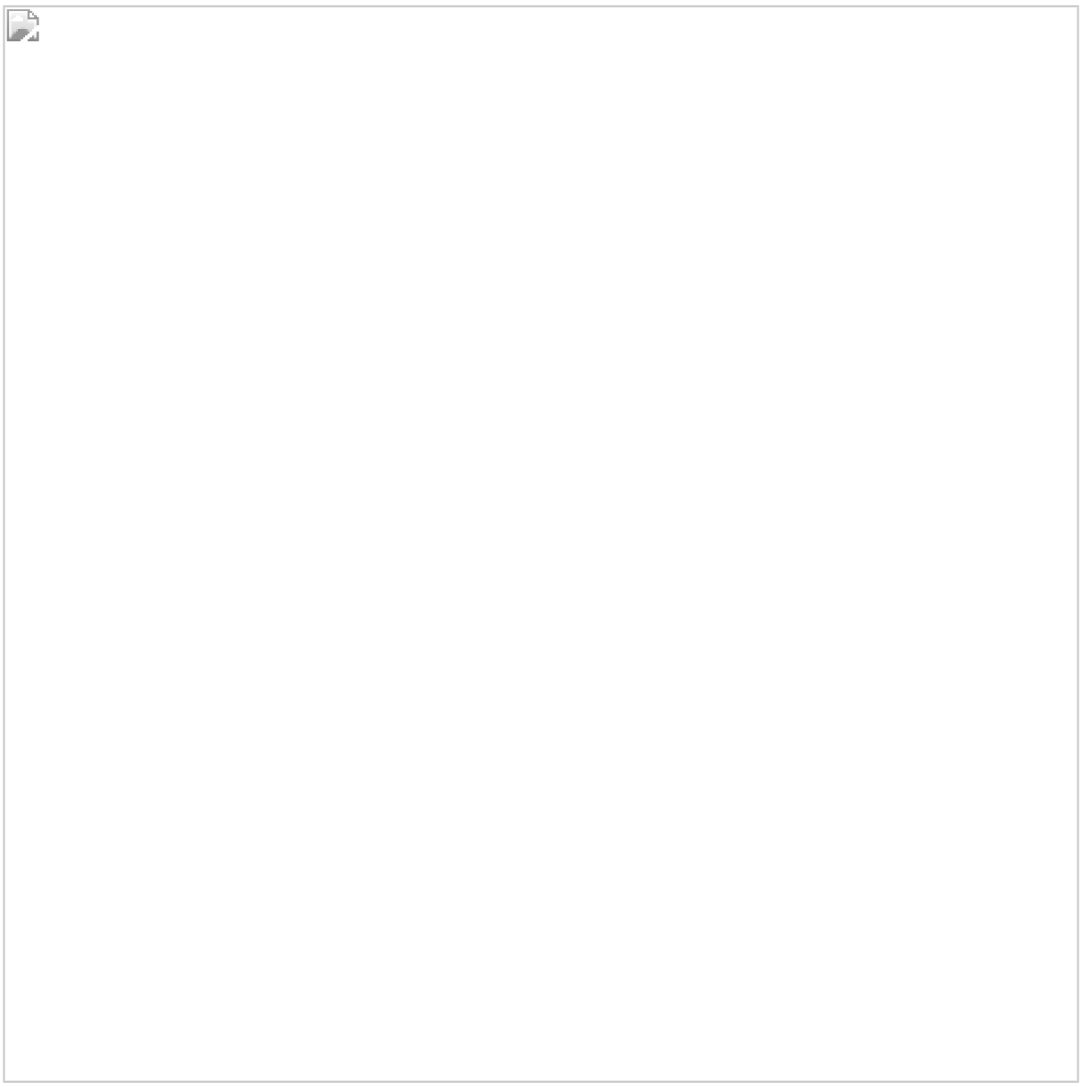
Iktomi stood with his hand on his long chin. The muskrat watched him out of the corners of his eyes. He could see that Iktomi was making a plan.

“Yes, yes,” said Iktomi. “I shall carry a large stone on my back. That will slacken my usual speed; and the race will be a fair one.”

They walked around to the other side of the lake. Iktomi found a heavy stone half buried in the shallow water and wrapped it in his blanket. The muskrat helped lift it onto Iktomi's back.

TALK ABOUT IT

Iktomi said the stone would make the race fair. What do you think the muskrat was thinking?

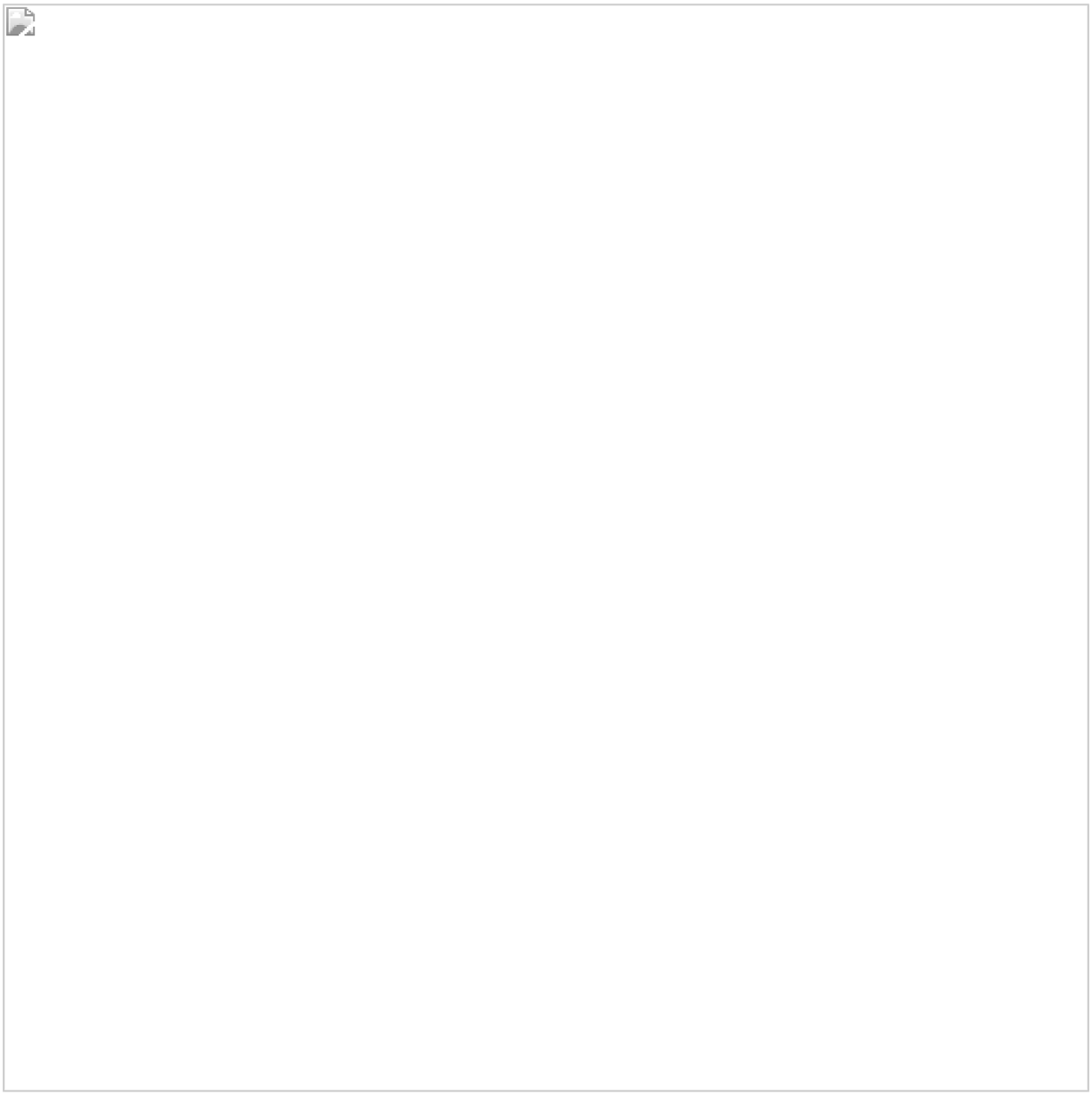


Think about it

1. What did Iktomi carry on his back?

- ○ A big stone
- ○ A bag of fish
- ○ A little muskrat

Two Paths Around the Lake



“Now, my friend, you shall run on the left side of the lake, I on the other,” said Iktomi. “The race is for the boiled fish in yonder kettle!”

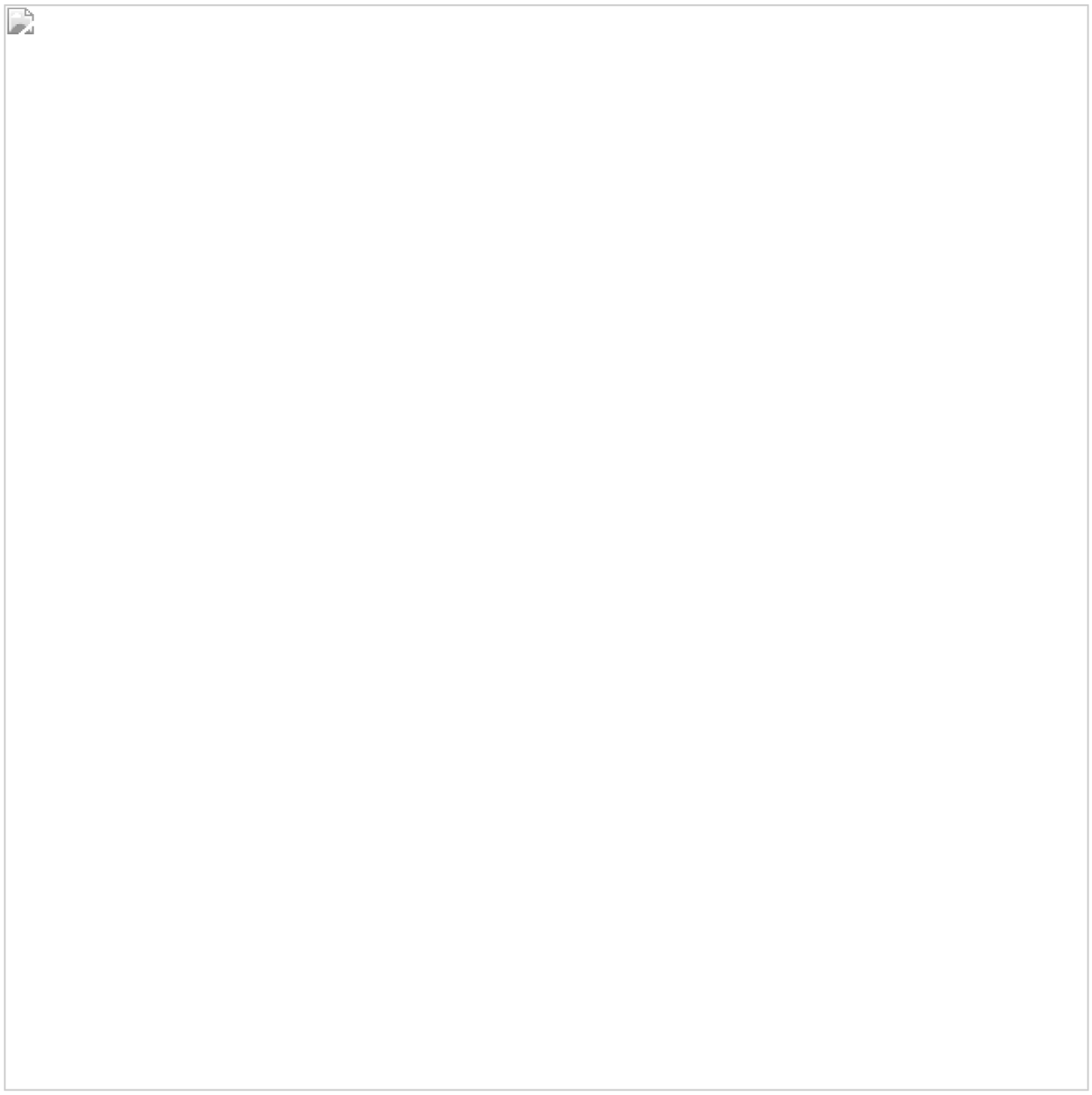
Each took a narrow path through the tall reeds. Iktomi found his load a heavy one. Sweat hung like beads on his brow, and his chest heaved hard and fast.

He looked across the lake, but he could not see the muskrat anywhere. Not one blade of grass moved. “Ah, has he gone so fast ahead that the disturbed grasses in his trail have quieted again?” he said.

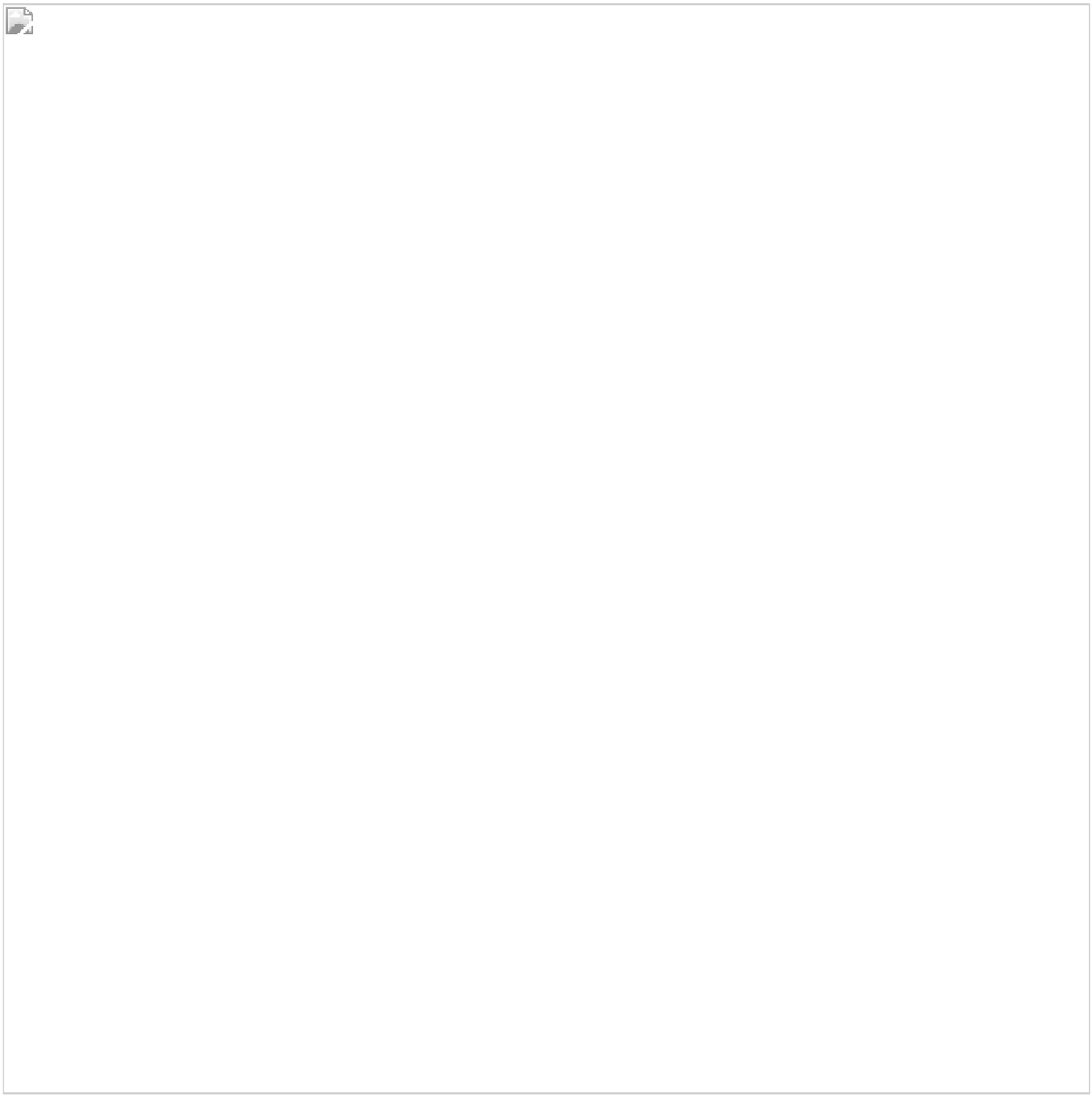
TALK ABOUT IT

Where do you think the muskrat had gone?

Two Paths Around the Lake · another picture



No More of This!



“No more of this!” said Iktomi. He dropped the heavy stone and ran toward the finish as fast as he could.

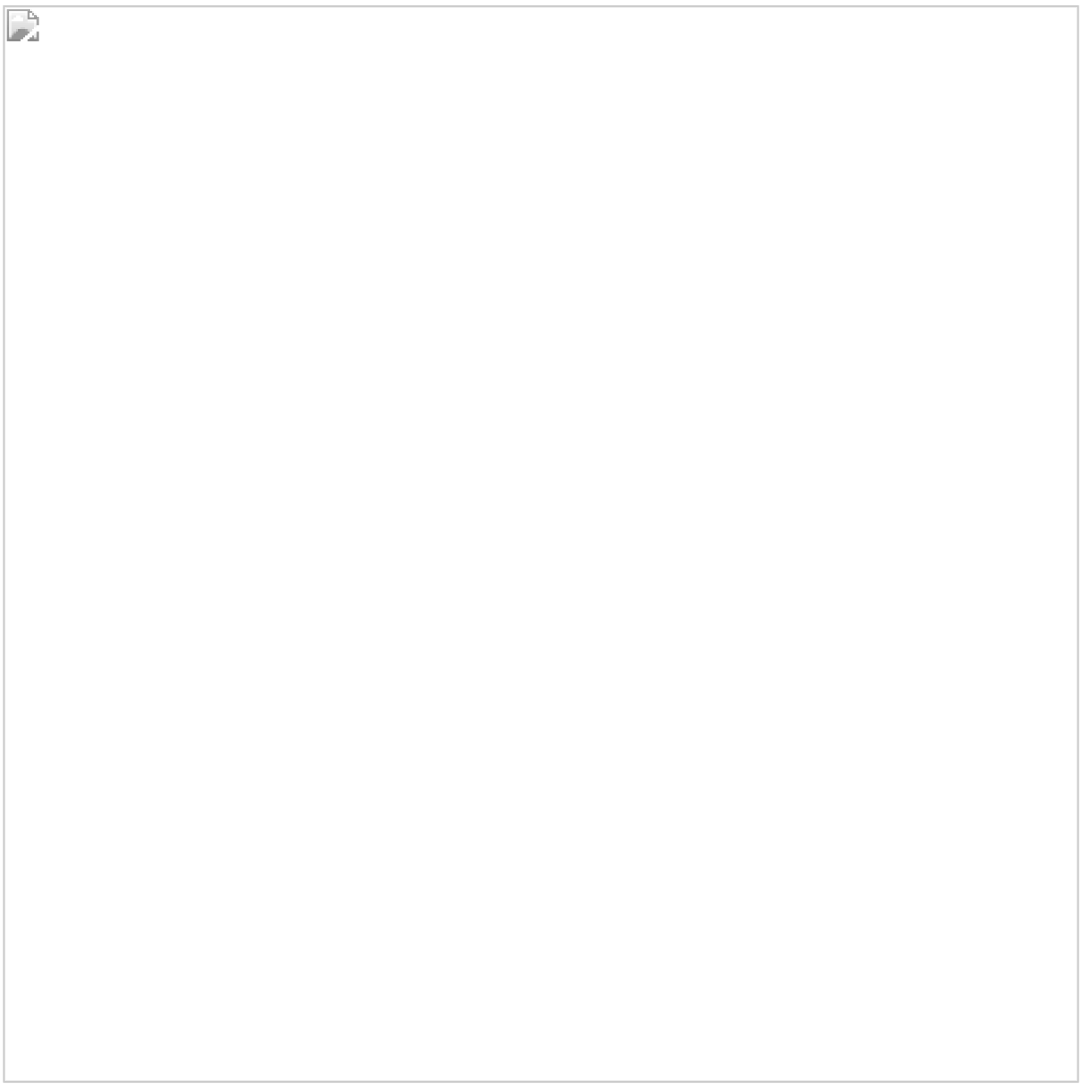
Soon he reached the heap of cold ashes. He stopped as if he had struck an invisible cliff. There was no pot of boiled fish! There was no muskrat in sight!

“Oh, if only I had shared my food like a real Dakota, I would not have lost it all!” he cried.

TALK ABOUT IT

Iktomi said he should have shared. What does sharing mean to you?

No More of This! · another picture

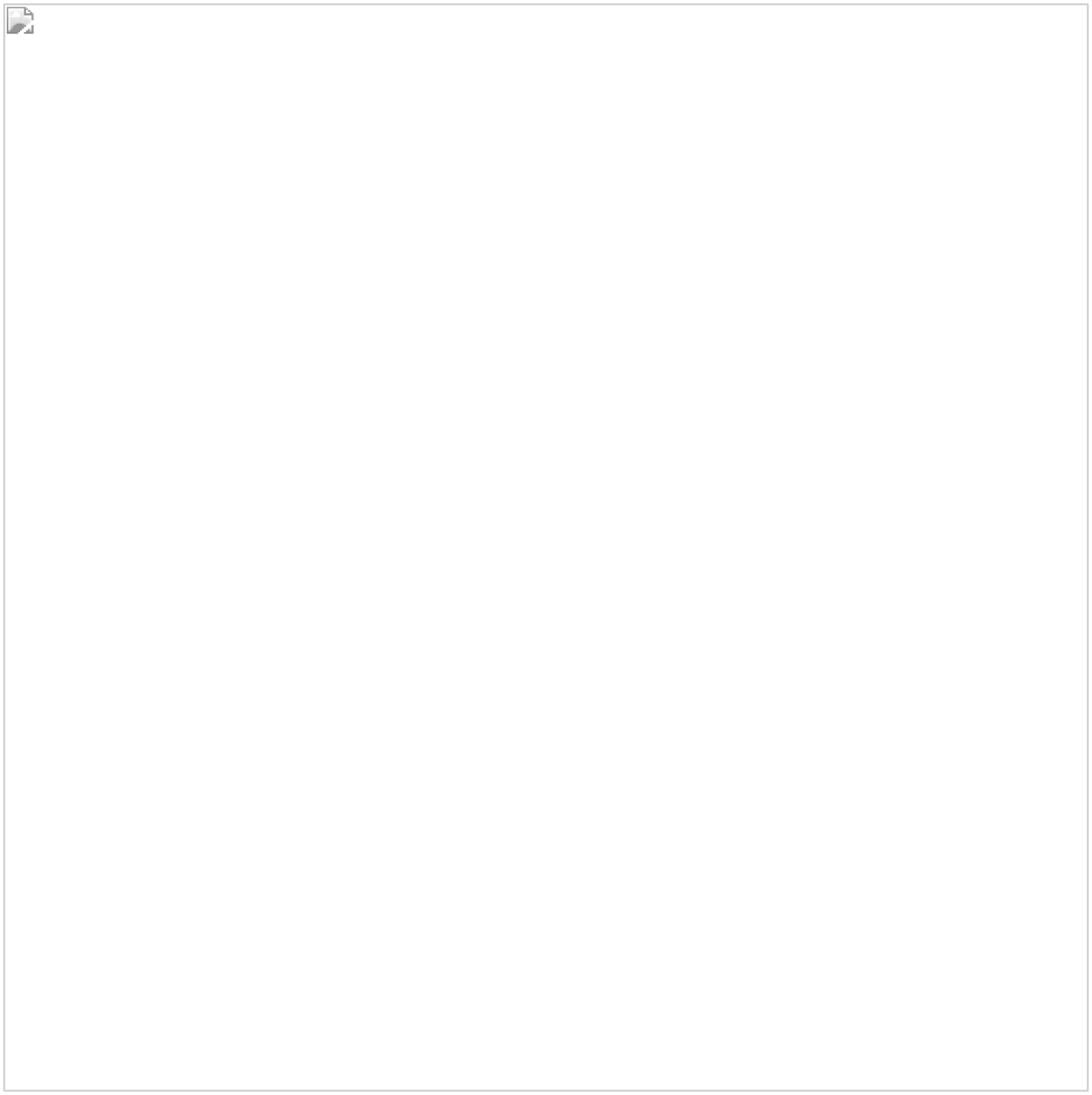


Think about it

1. What did Iktomi find when he got back to the ashes?

- ○ The pot was still there
- ○ The pot of fish was gone
- ○ A new pot of soup

A Bone to Gnaw



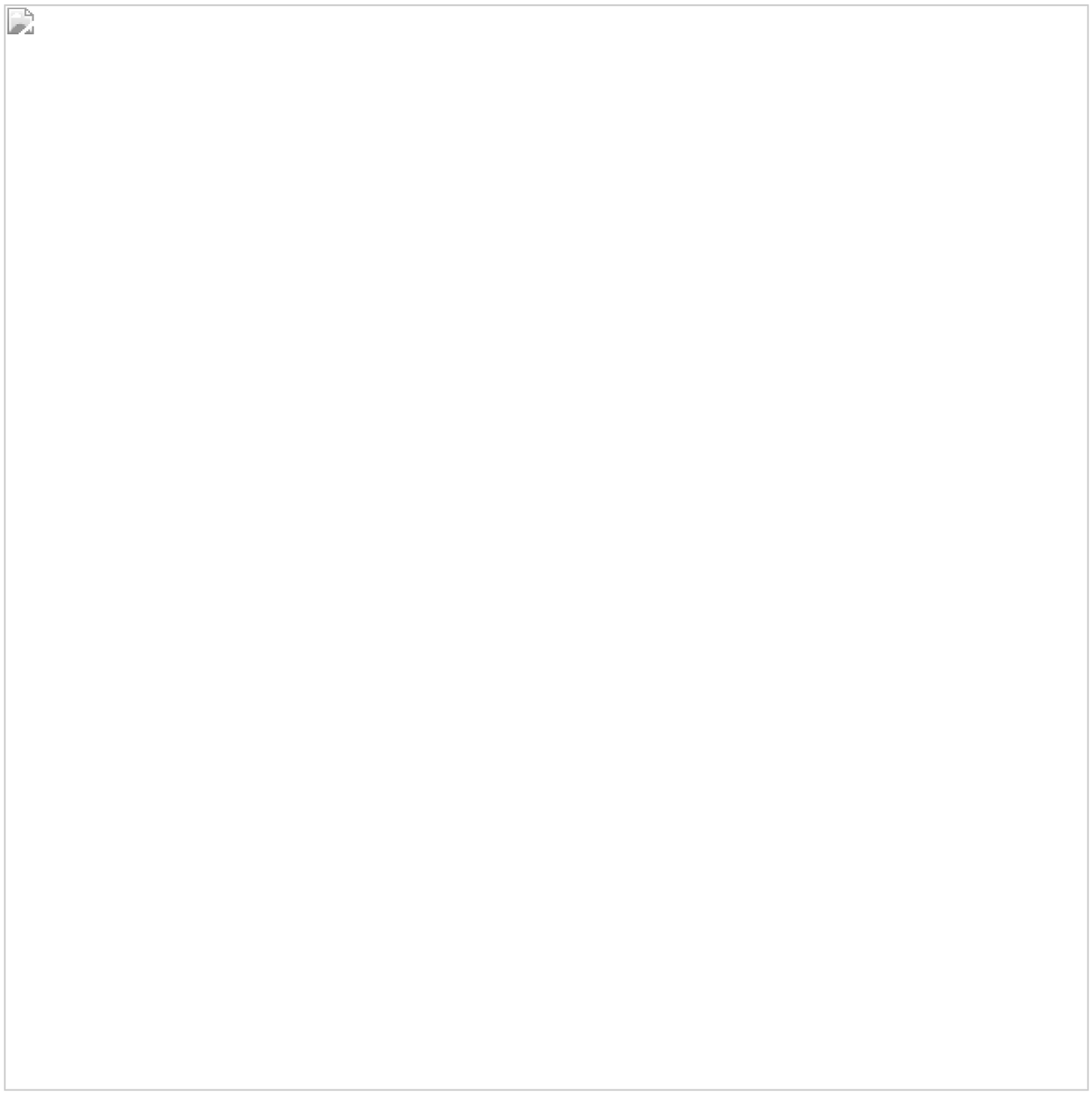
Iktomi stepped to the water's edge and peeped far into the deep water. “There!” he said. “I see you, my friend, sitting with your ankles wound around my little pot of fish! My friend, I am hungry. Give me a bone!”

“Ha! ha! ha!” laughed the muskrat. But the sound did not come up out of the lake. It came down from overhead.

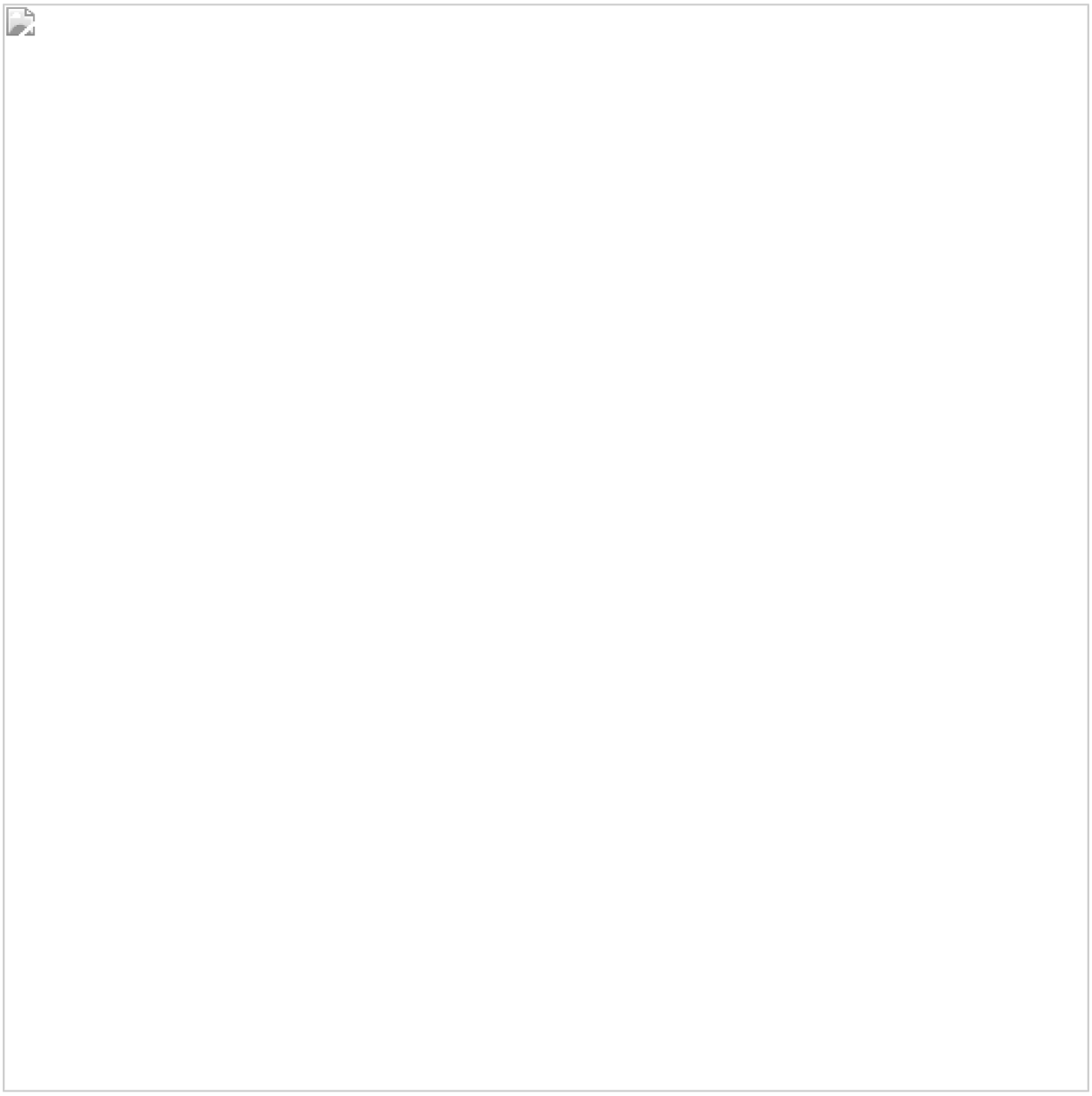
TALK ABOUT IT

Iktomi was looking in the water, but the laugh came from above. Can you guess where the muskrat was?

A Bone to Gnaw · another picture



The Muskrat in the Willow



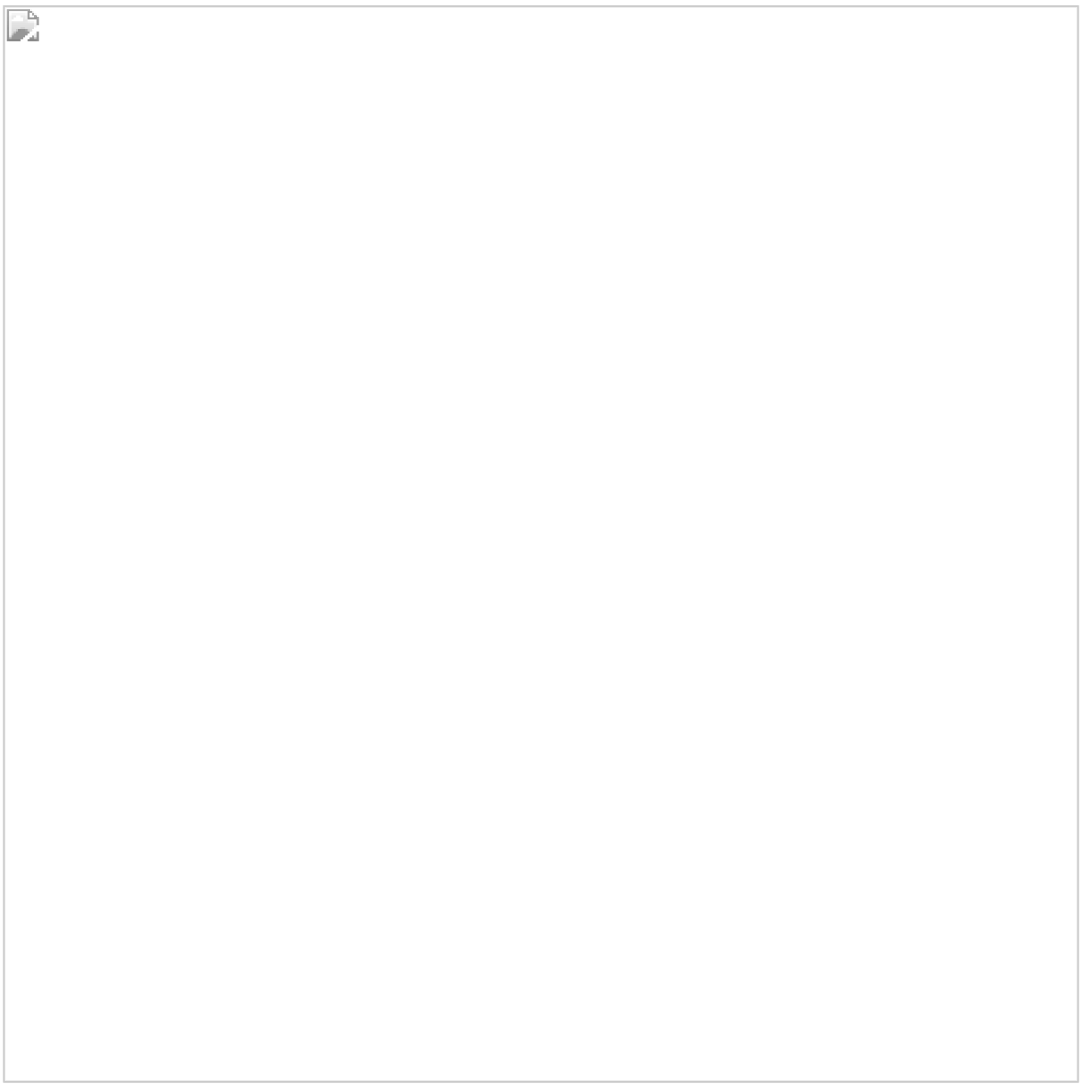
Iktomi turned his face up into the great willow tree. He opened his mouth wide and begged, “My friend, my friend, give me a bone to gnaw!”

“Ha! ha!” laughed the muskrat. Leaning over the limb he sat upon, he let a small sharp bone fall. It dropped right into Iktomi's throat, and he almost choked before he could get it out.

Up in the tree the muskrat sat laughing loud. “Next time, say to a visiting friend, 'Be seated beside me, my friend. Let me share with you my food.'”

TALK ABOUT IT

The muskrat told Iktomi what to say next time. What would you say to a visitor?



Think about it

1. Where was the muskrat hiding at the end?

- ○ In the lake
- ○ In the wild rice
- ○ In the willow tree

2. What did the muskrat tell Iktomi to say next time?

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

— Yeshua HaMashiach

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