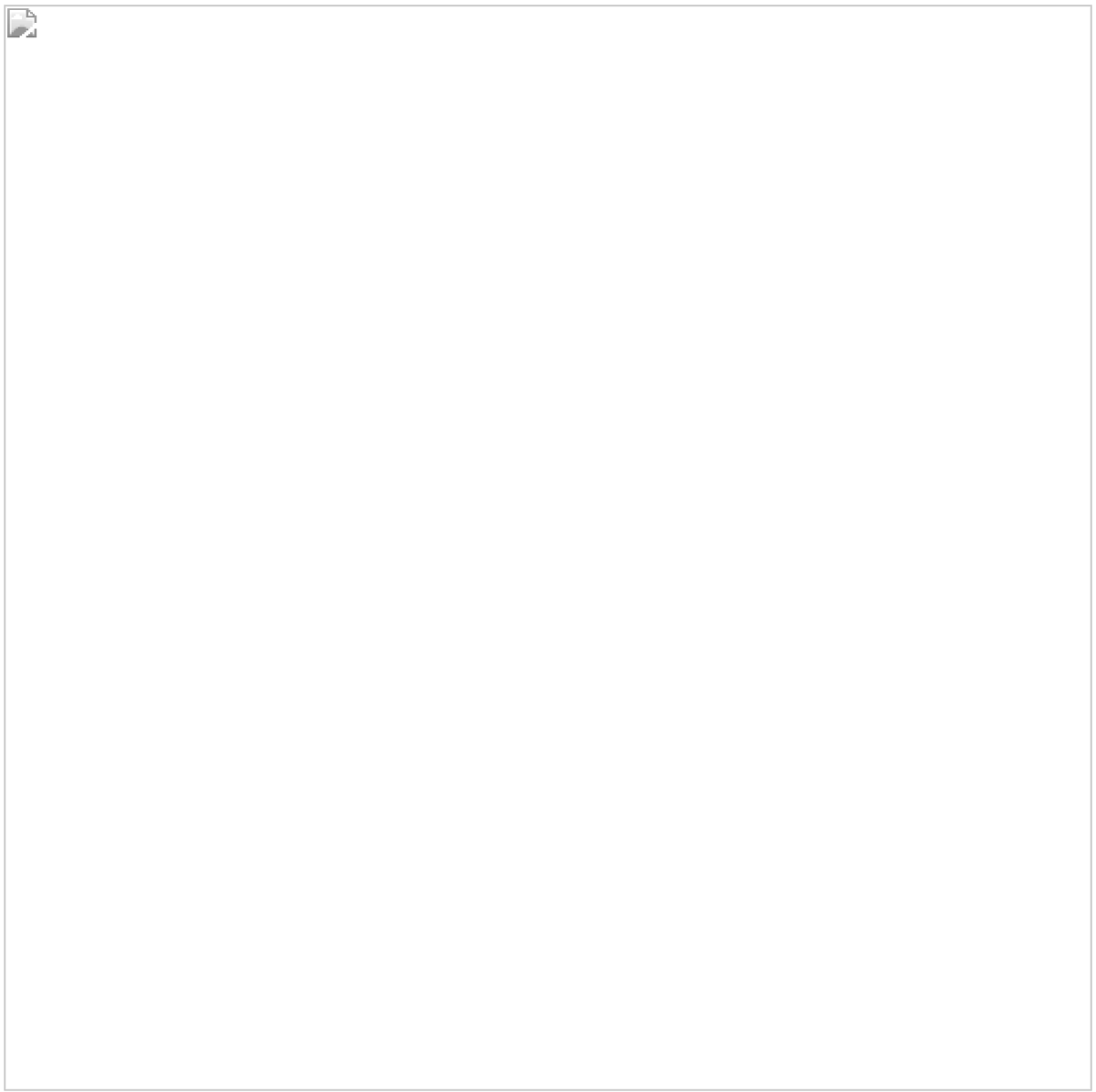
COLORING THE CLASSICS

Little Women

Four sisters, a hard winter, and a house full of love



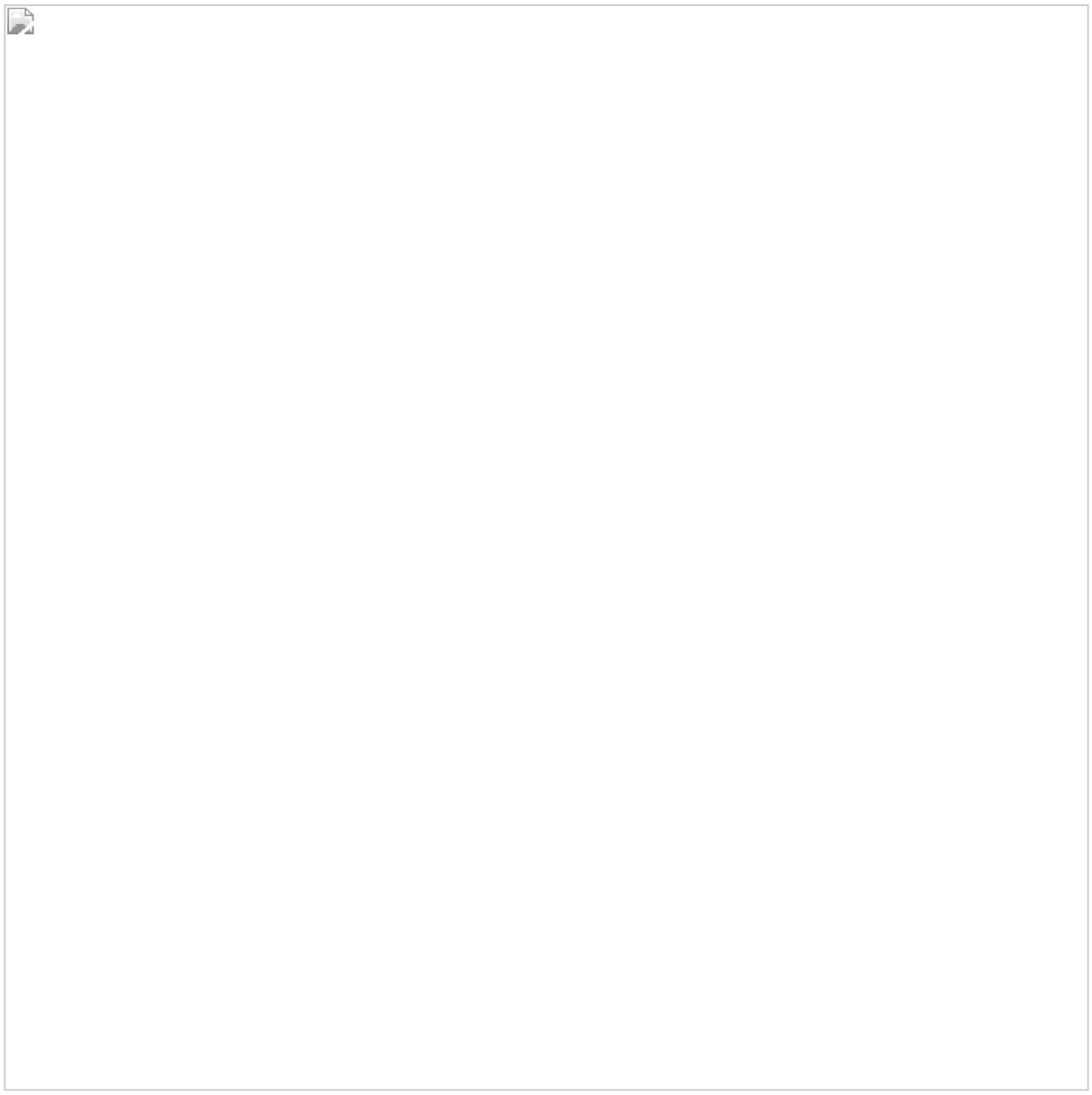
By Louisa May Alcott

TALK ABOUT IT

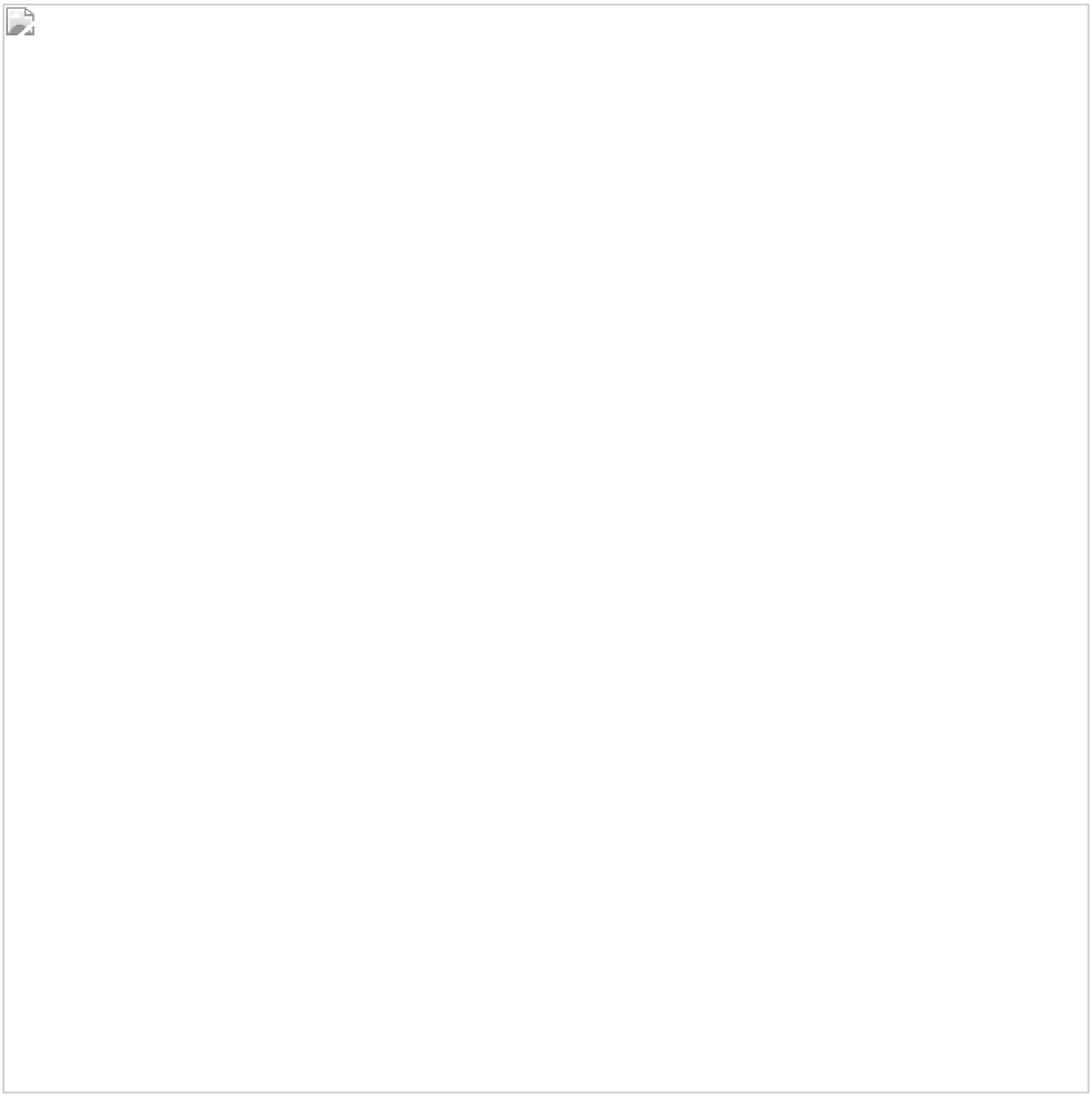
Who are the people in your family, or the people who are like family to you?

This book belongs to _____

Little Women · another picture



No Presents



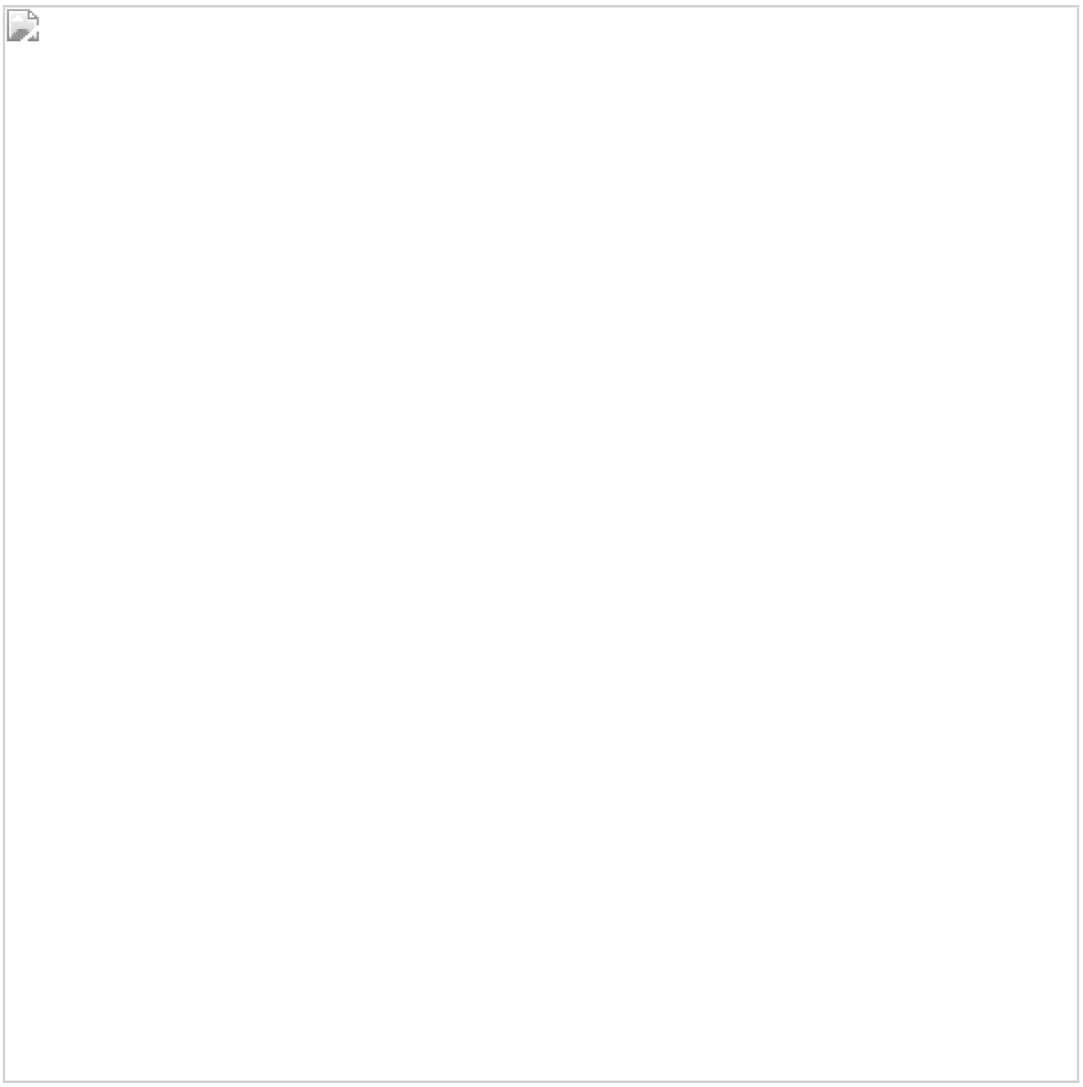
It was winter, and the four March sisters sat by the fire. Meg was the oldest. Jo was bold and loved books. Beth was shy and gentle. Amy was the youngest.

Their father was far away, serving in the war. Each girl had one dollar. "Christmas won't be Christmas without any presents," grumbled Jo, lying on the rug.

"We've got Father and Mother, and each other," said Beth softly from her corner.

TALK ABOUT IT

What would you want to say to a sister who was grumbling? What would you spend one dollar on?



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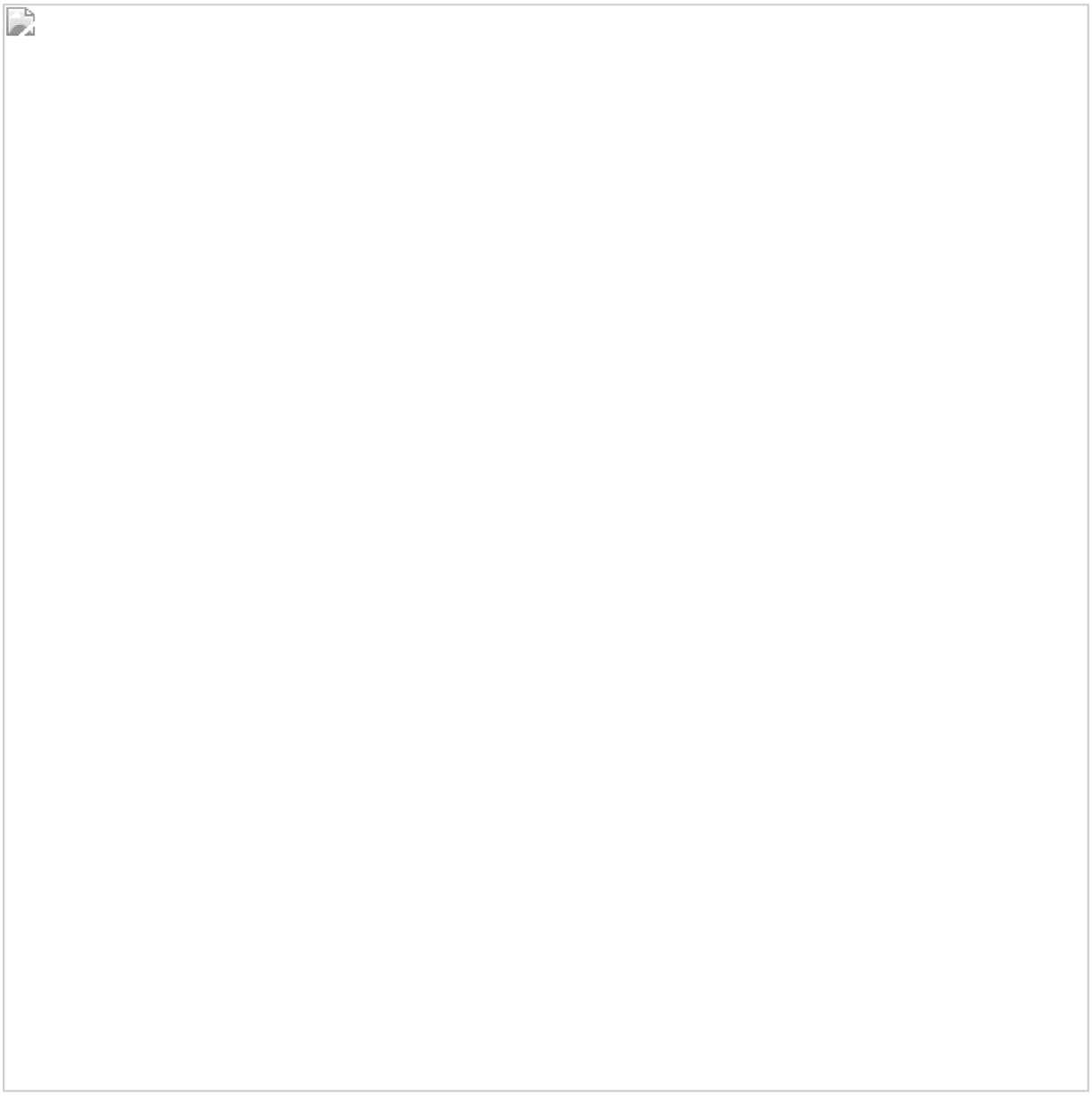
A Letter from Father



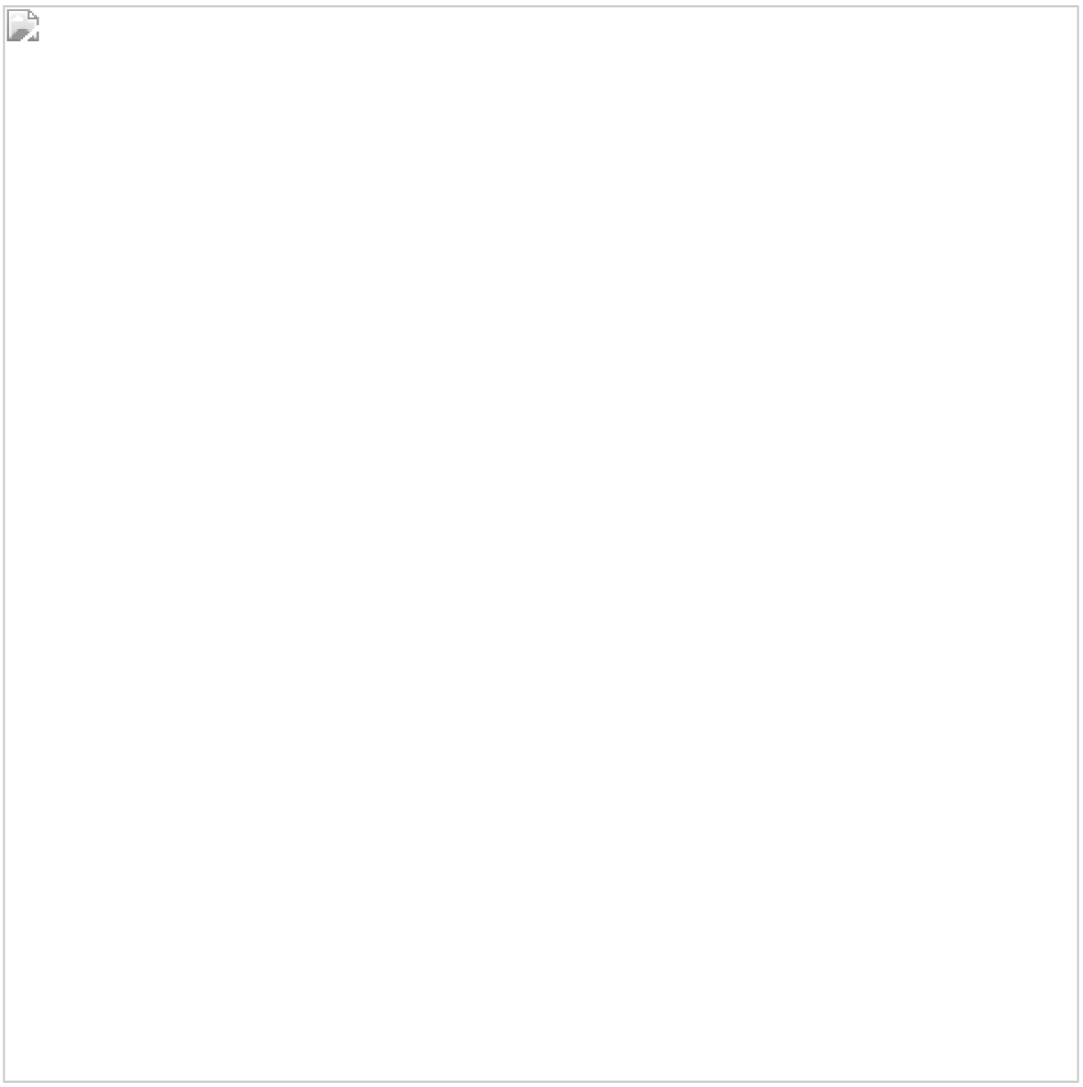
Their mother, whom they called Marmee, came home with a letter from Father. She read it to them by the fire. He sent his love, and he wrote that he would come home fonder and prouder than ever of his little women.

Marmee reminded them of an old game. When they were little, they had played Pilgrim's Progress, with piece bags on their backs for burdens. She said they might "begin again, not in play, but in earnest," and try it for real.

The girls decided to try to be good, a little bit each day.

TALK ABOUT IT

What game did you play when you were smaller? Would you like to play it again?



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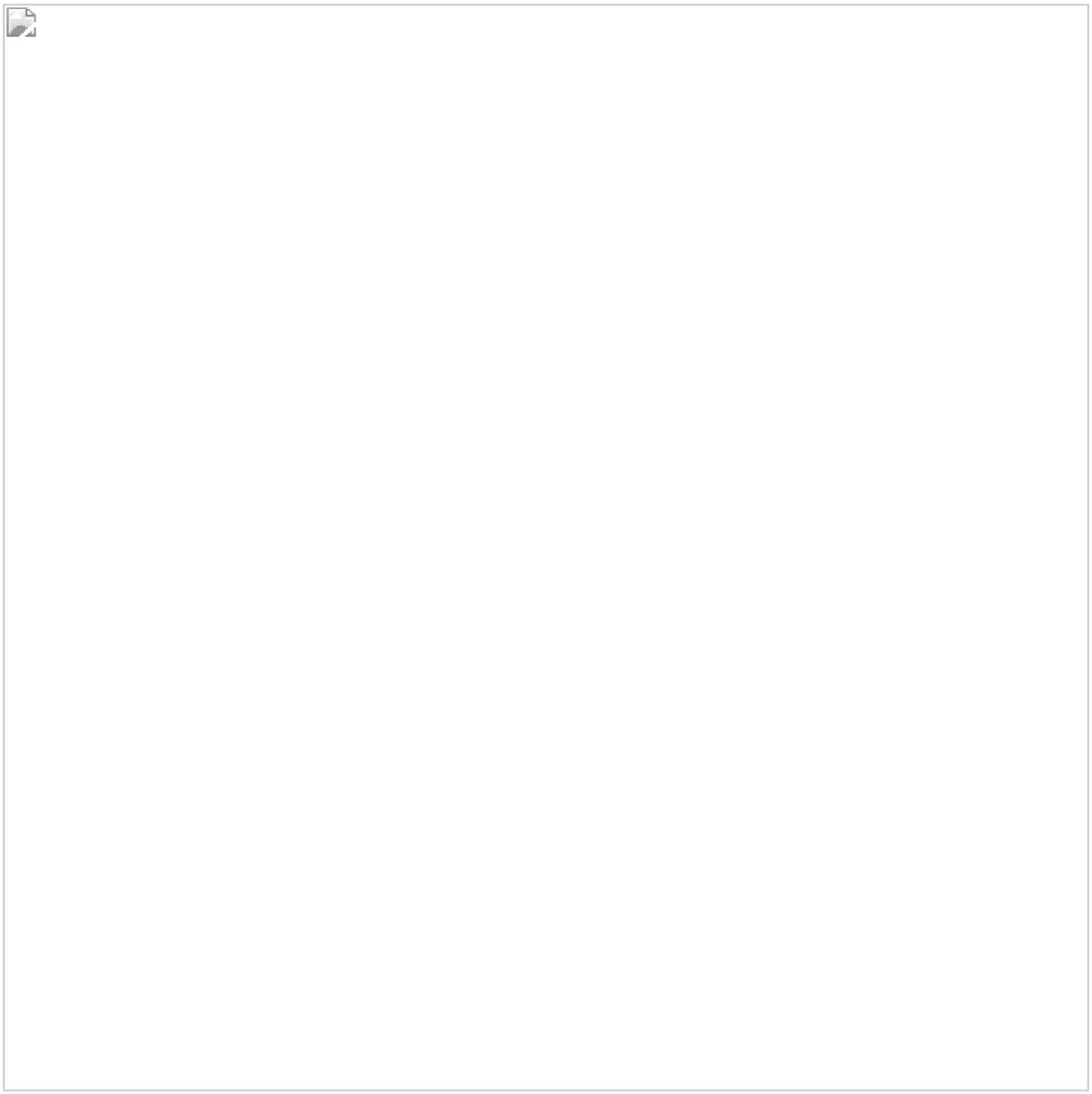
The Christmas Breakfast



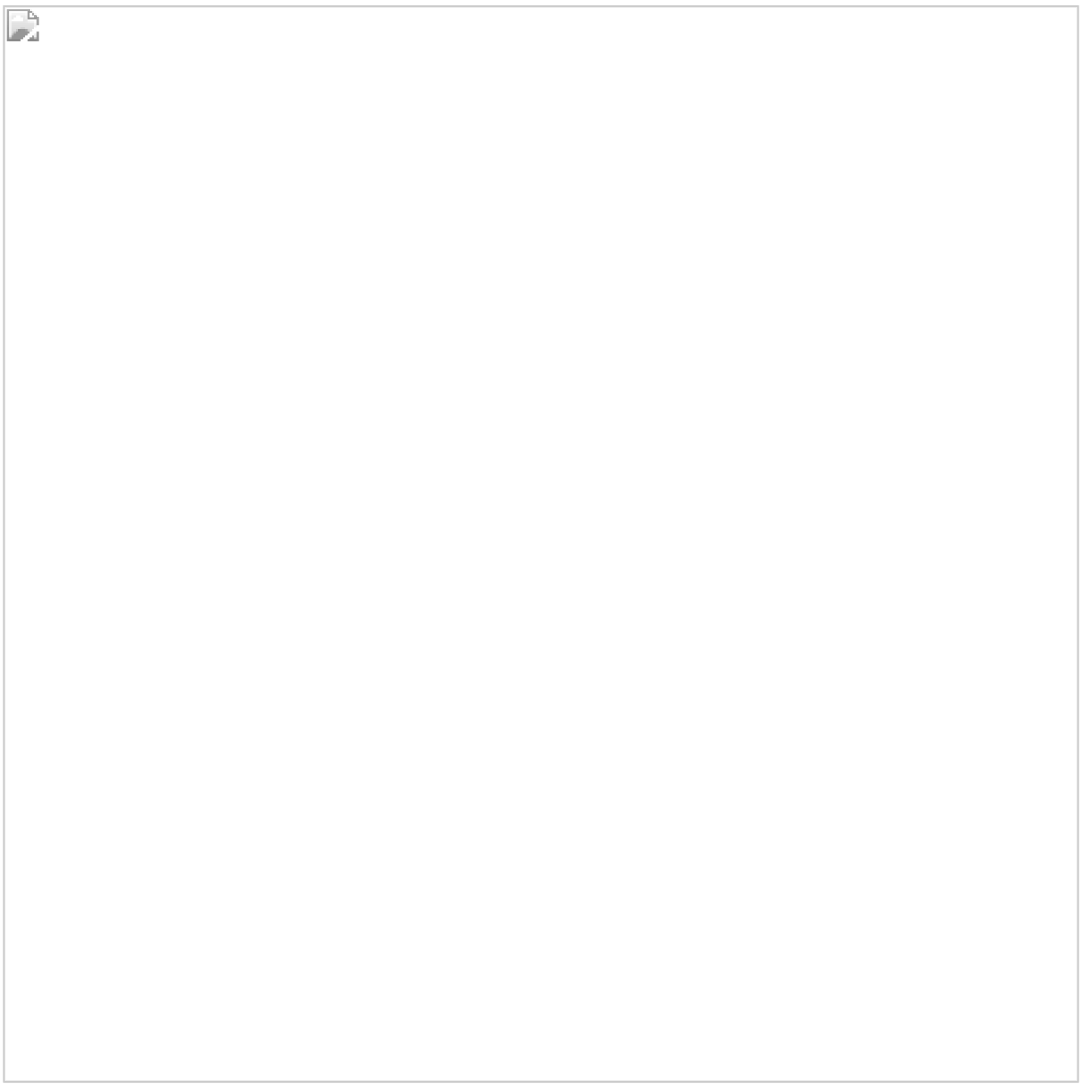
On Christmas morning each girl found a little book under her pillow. They said, “Merry Christmas, Marmee!” and Marmee told them about a poor family nearby, with a new baby and six hungry children and no fire.

“My girls, will you give them your breakfast as a Christmas present?” she asked.

The sisters thought about their hot muffins and cream. Then they put on their coats and carried it all across town. Hannah, who helped in the house, went along with logs for the fire.

TALK ABOUT IT

What would you do if you were asked to give away your breakfast? What do you think the children in that cold room might have said?



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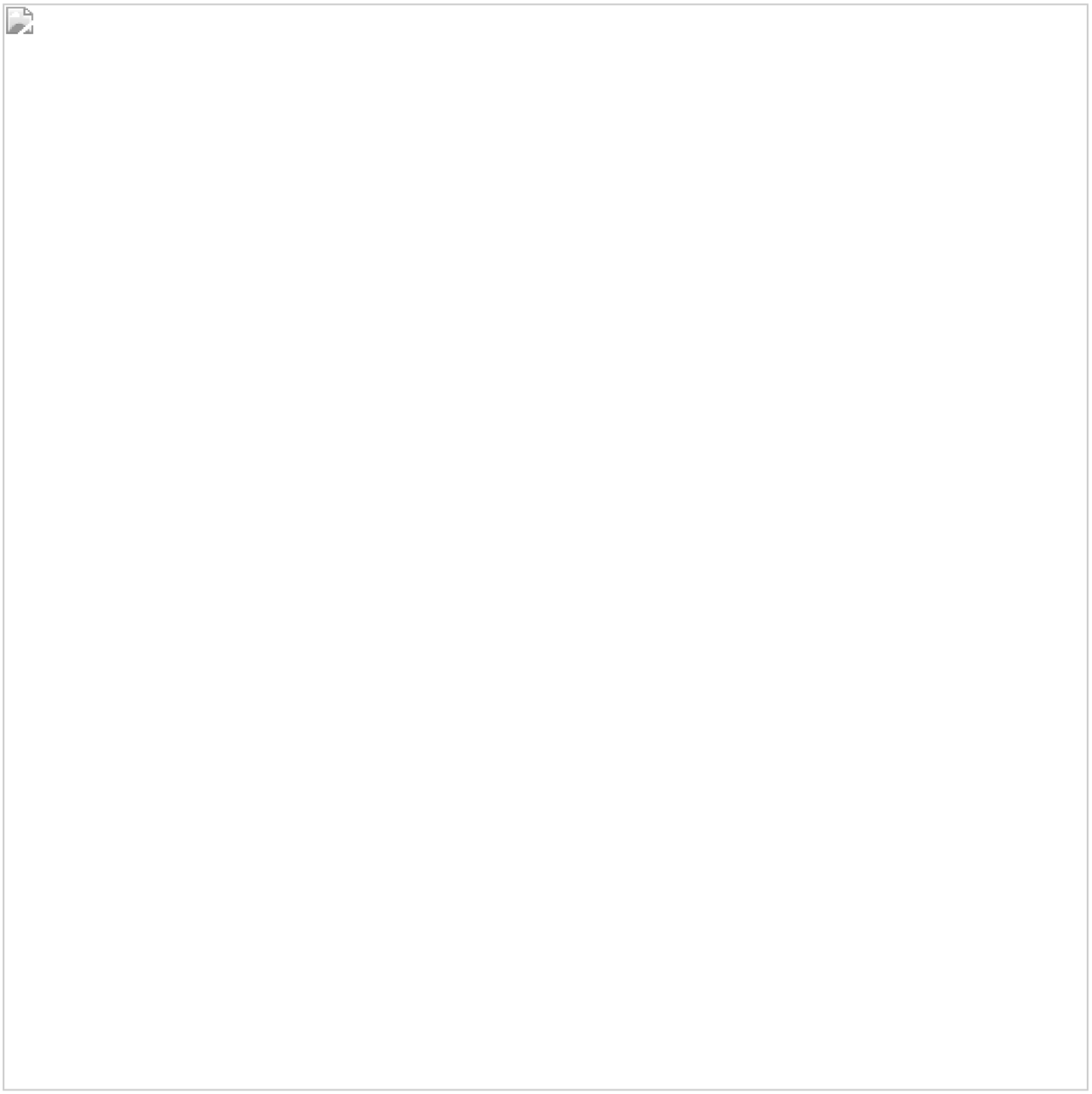
A Supper from Next Door



That evening the girls put on a play for their friends, and Jo stamped about in big boots.

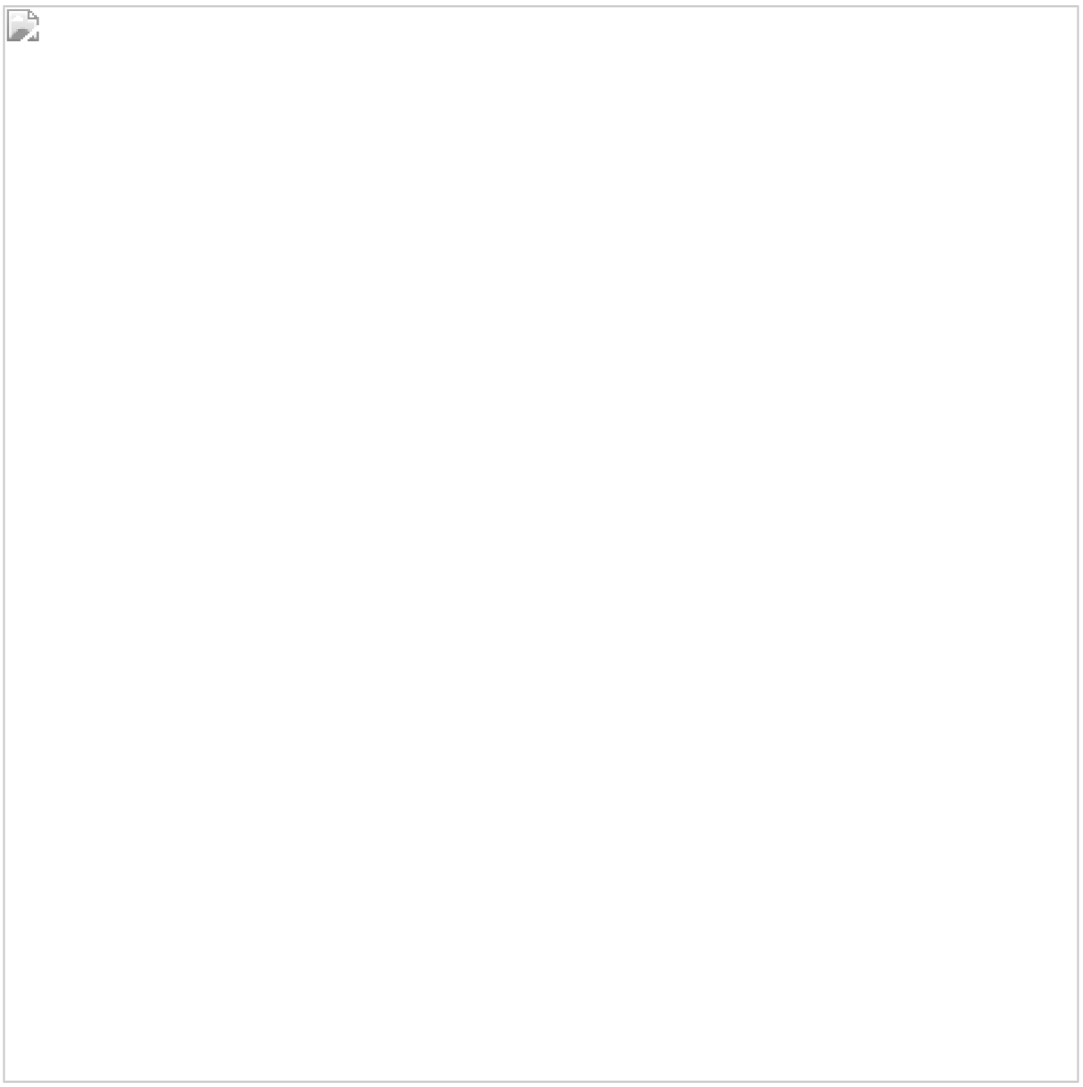
Then Hannah brought in a surprise. The old man next door, Mr. Laurence, had heard about the breakfast, and he sent over ice cream, cake, fruit, and flowers.

“Funny angels in hoods and mittens,” said Jo, and set them all laughing.

TALK ABOUT IT

Why do you think the old man next door sent the supper? Have you ever had a surprise from a neighbor?

A Supper from Next Door · another picture



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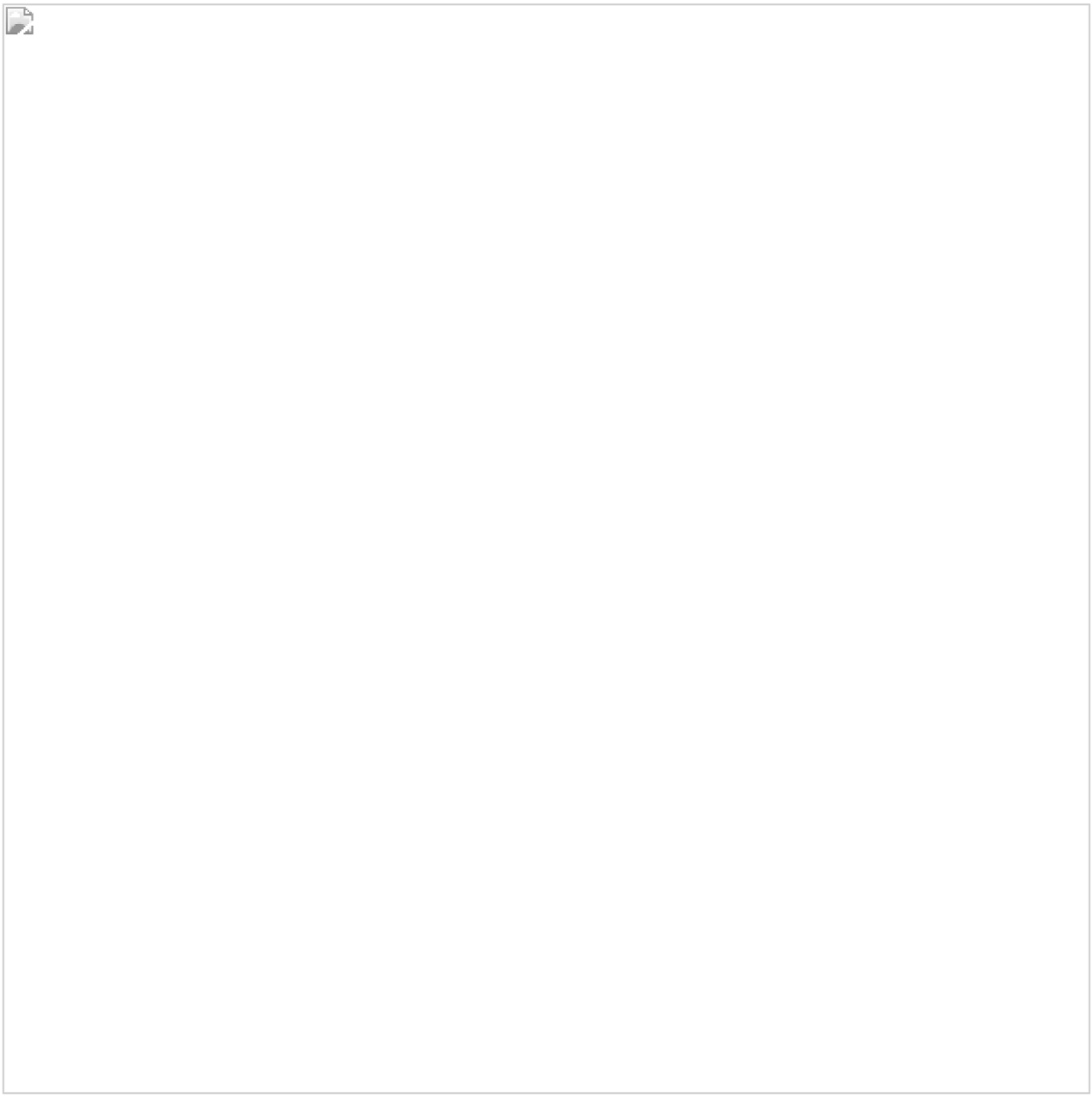
Jo Meets Laurie



On New Year's Eve the older girls went to a party. Jo was shy, and she hid in a little room behind a curtain.

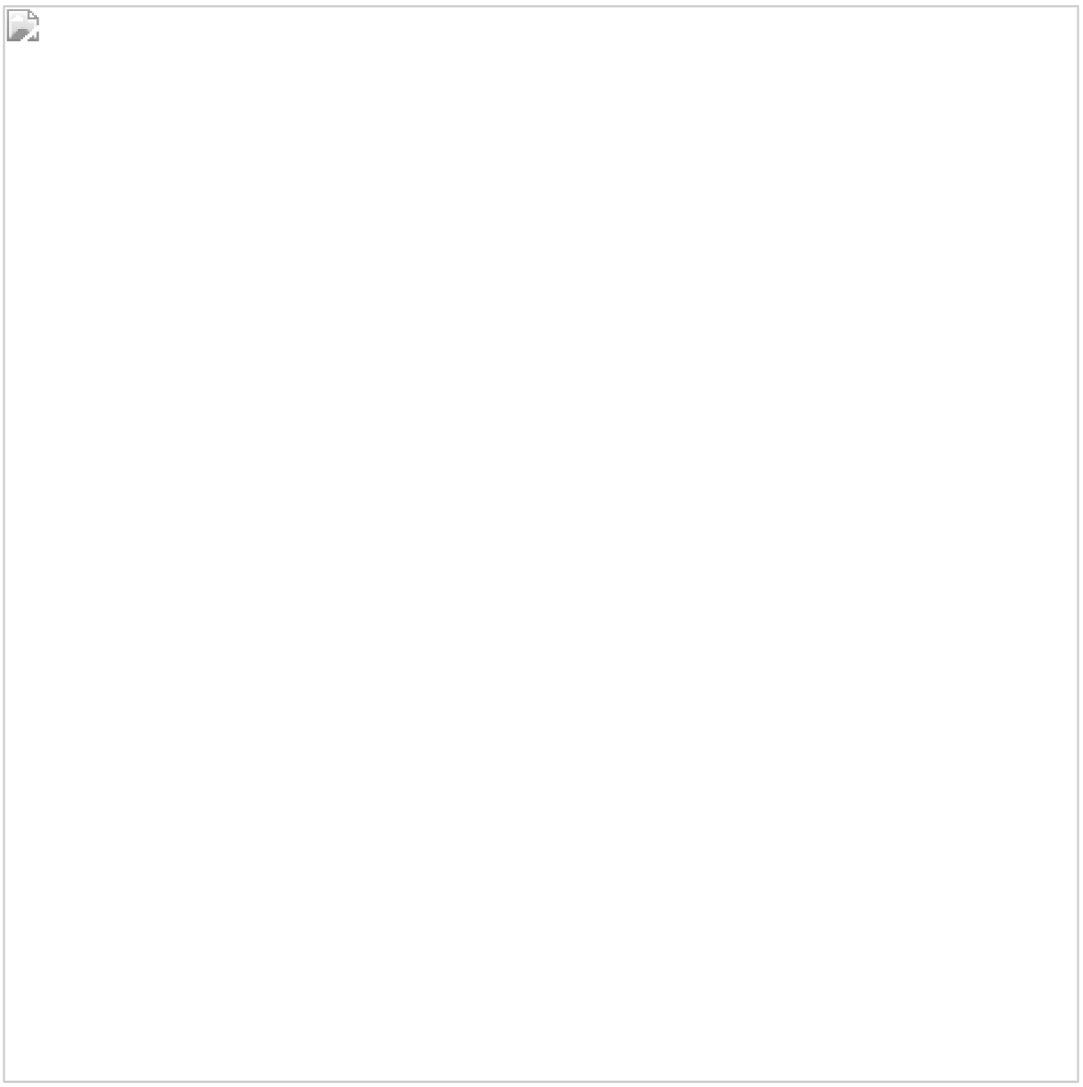
A tall boy had hidden there too. He lived in the big house next door, and his name was Laurie. He grinned and said, "I'm not Mr. Laurence, I'm only Laurie."

They talked and laughed and danced together, and they became friends right away.

TALK ABOUT IT

Where would you hide at a party if you felt shy? What do you say to someone new?

Jo Meets Laurie · another picture



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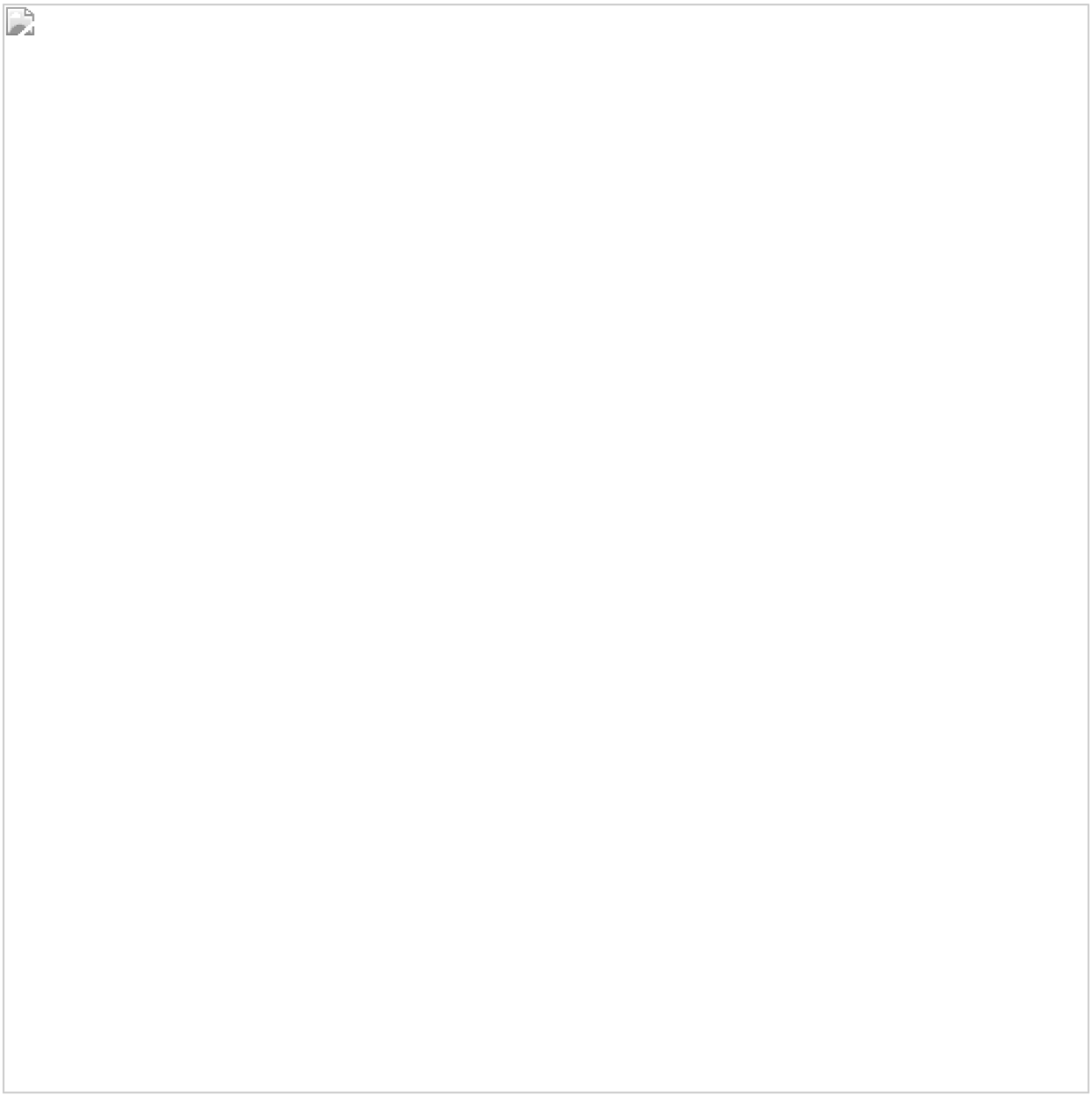
A Lonely Boy Next Door



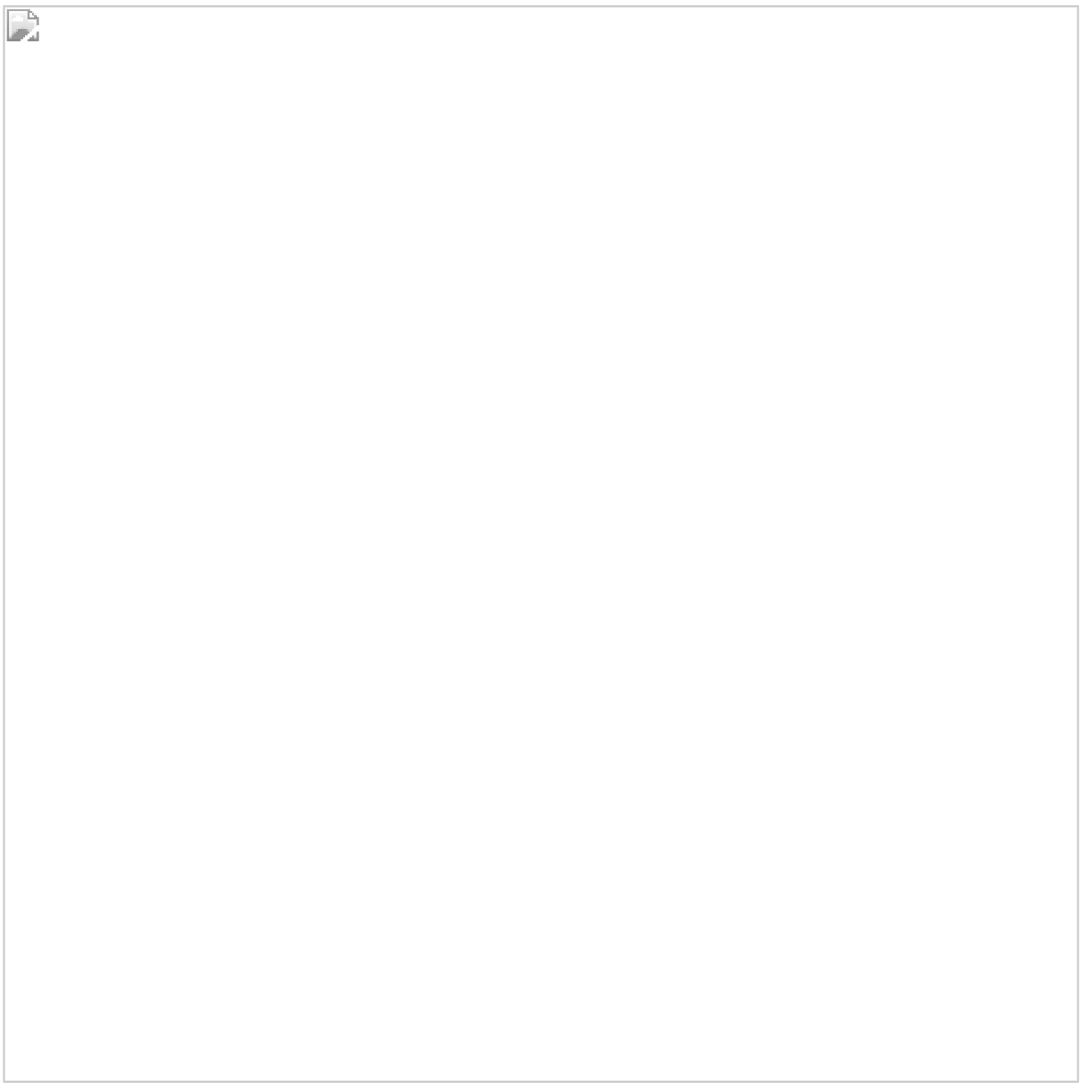
Laurie lived with his grandfather in the big house. He was ill with a cold and by himself. The March girls could see him looking at their lighted window.

Jo carried over a dish of blanc mange and three kittens to cheer him. “We are not strangers, we are neighbors,” she told him, and Laurie began to smile.

Soon the March girls and Laurie were friends, and he came to their house to play.

TALK ABOUT IT

What could you bring to cheer up a friend who was alone? What does it mean to be a neighbor?



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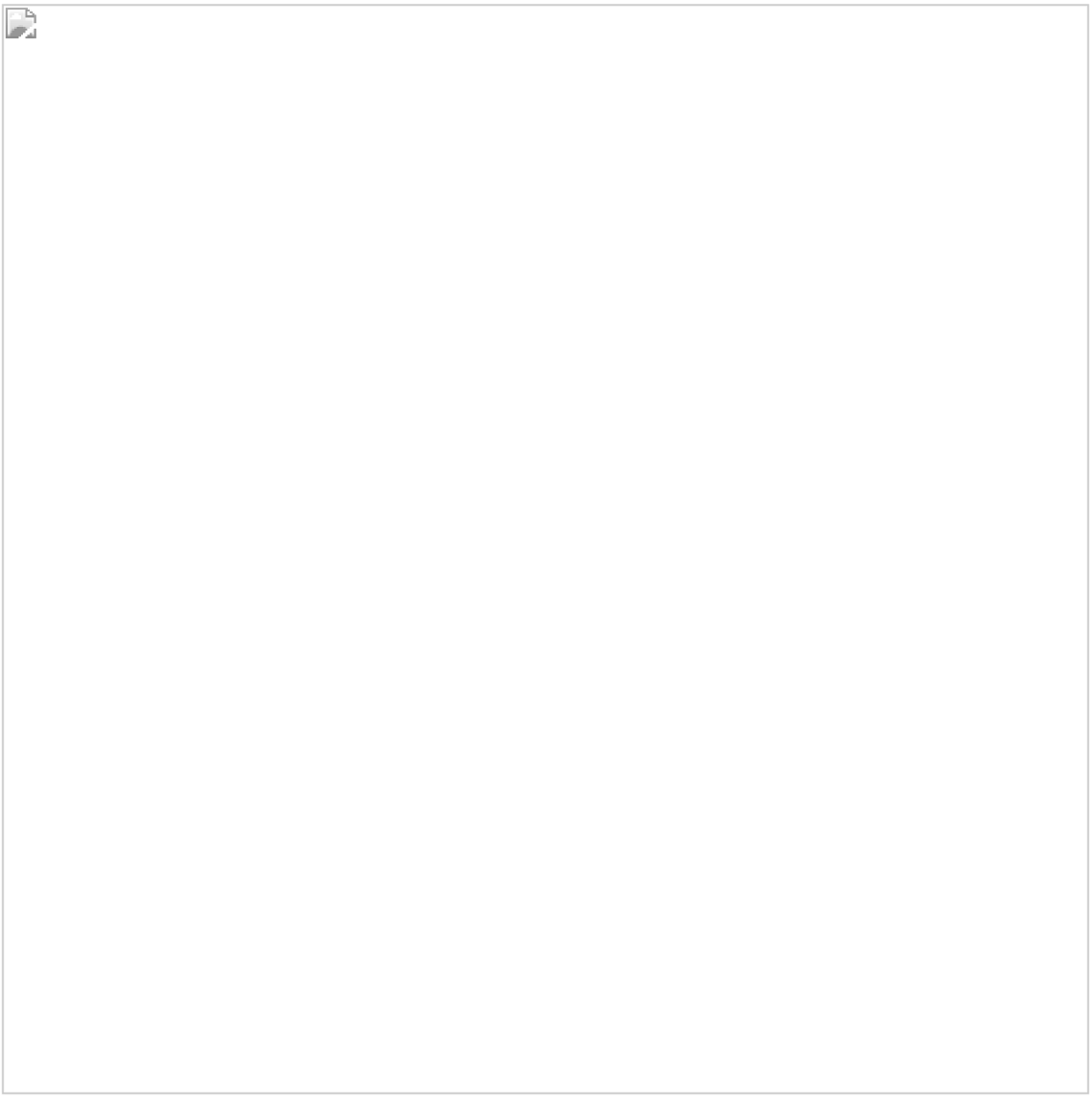
Beth and the Piano



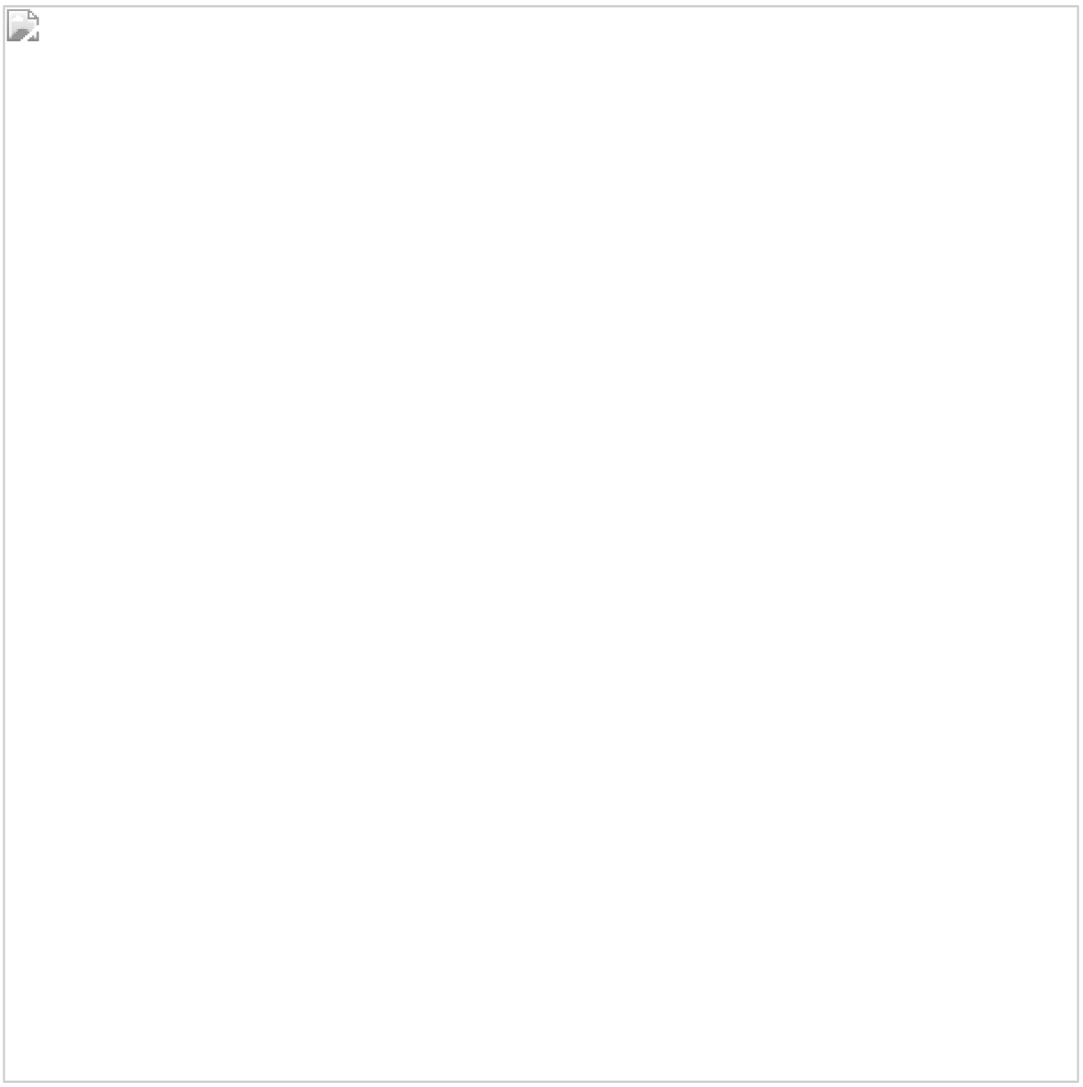
Beth loved music, but the Marches had only an old, worn piano. Mr. Laurence had a fine one, and Beth was afraid of him.

But he said she might come and play it whenever she liked, if the girls cared to come. “Oh sir, they do care, very very much!” said shy Beth. She crept in to play, and sewed him slippers to say thank you.

Then a little piano came for Beth, from Mr. Laurence. When she went to thank him, he said, “I had a little girl once, with eyes like these.” Beth reached up and kissed him.

TALK ABOUT IT

Have you ever been brave to do something you felt shy about? What do you think the piano sounded like?



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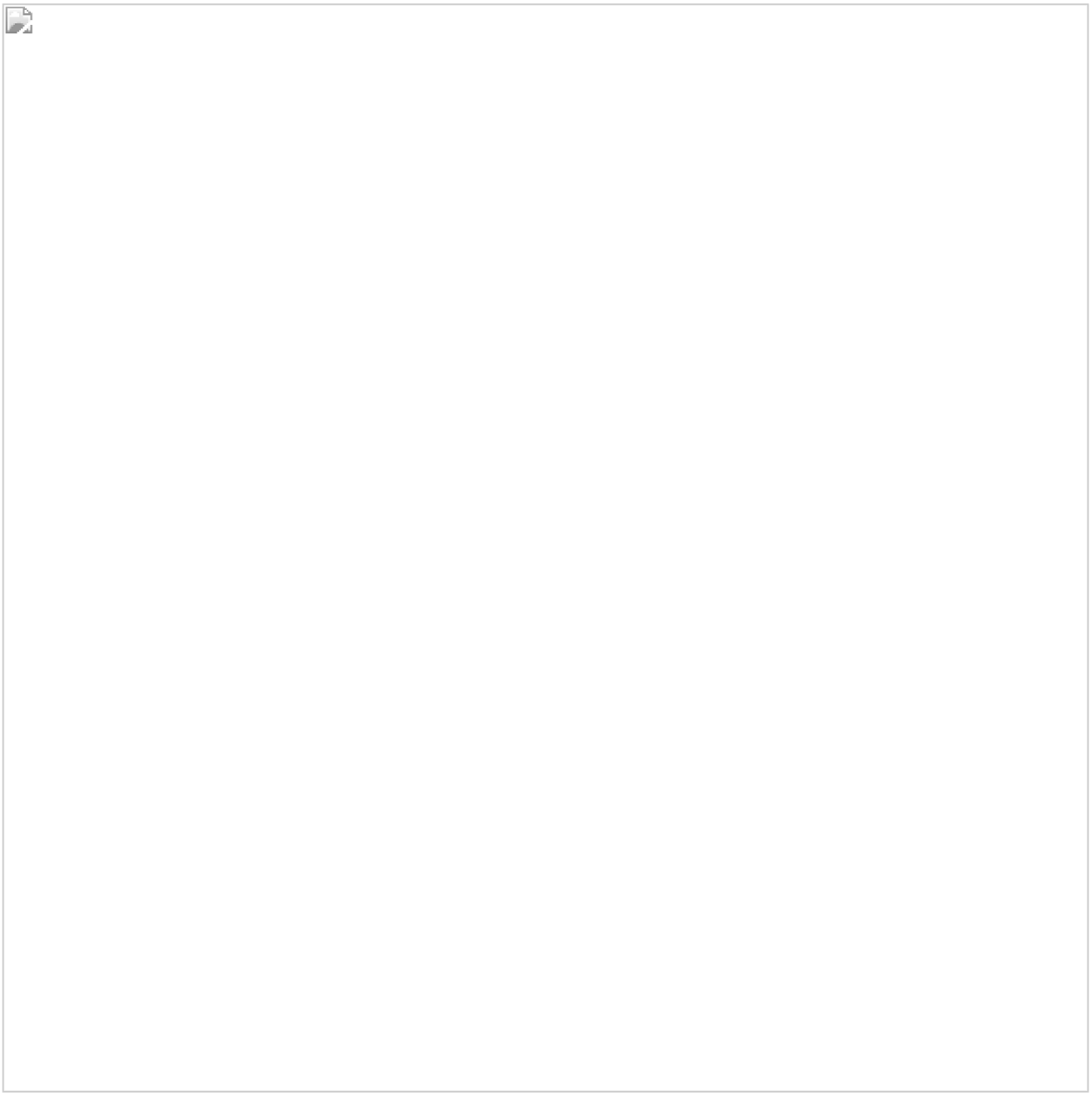
Jo's Lost Book



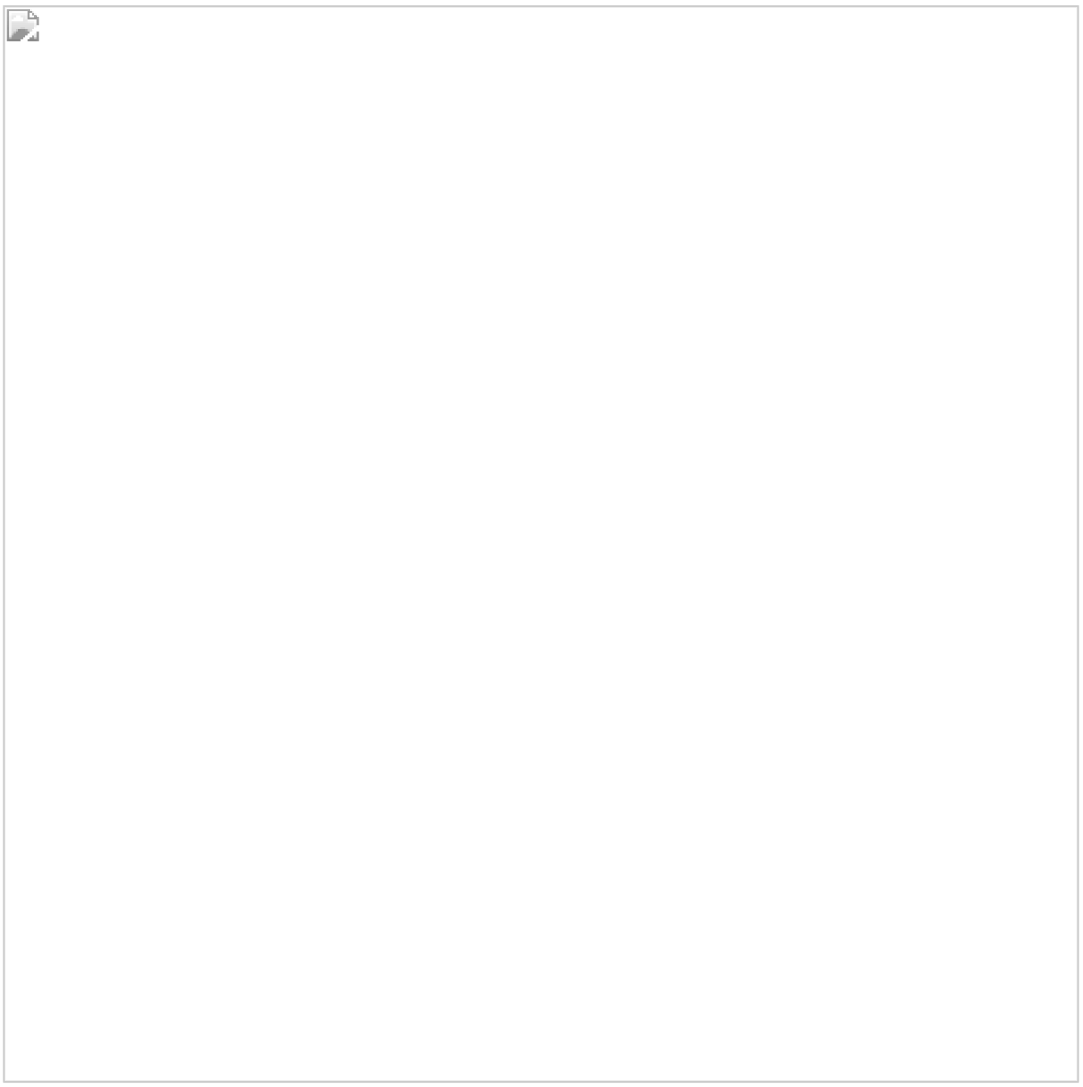
Jo wrote stories. She had filled a book with fairy tales, and she was proud of it.

One day Jo and Meg would not take Amy to the theater. Amy was cross, and she burned Jo's book.

When Jo found out she was very angry. "I never shall forgive you," she told Amy.

TALK ABOUT IT

Why do you think Amy did it? What would you do if someone ruined something you made?



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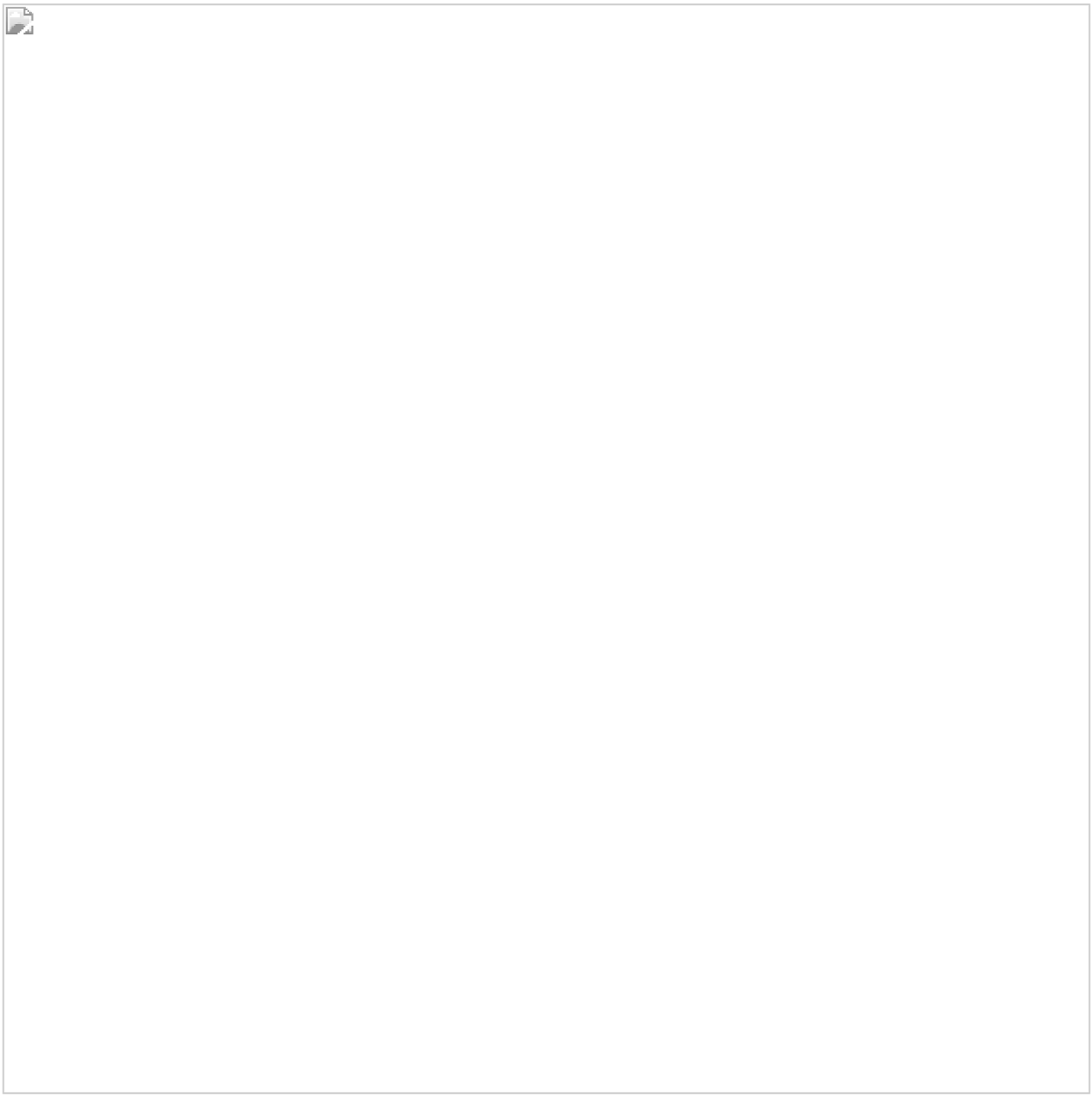
The Ice



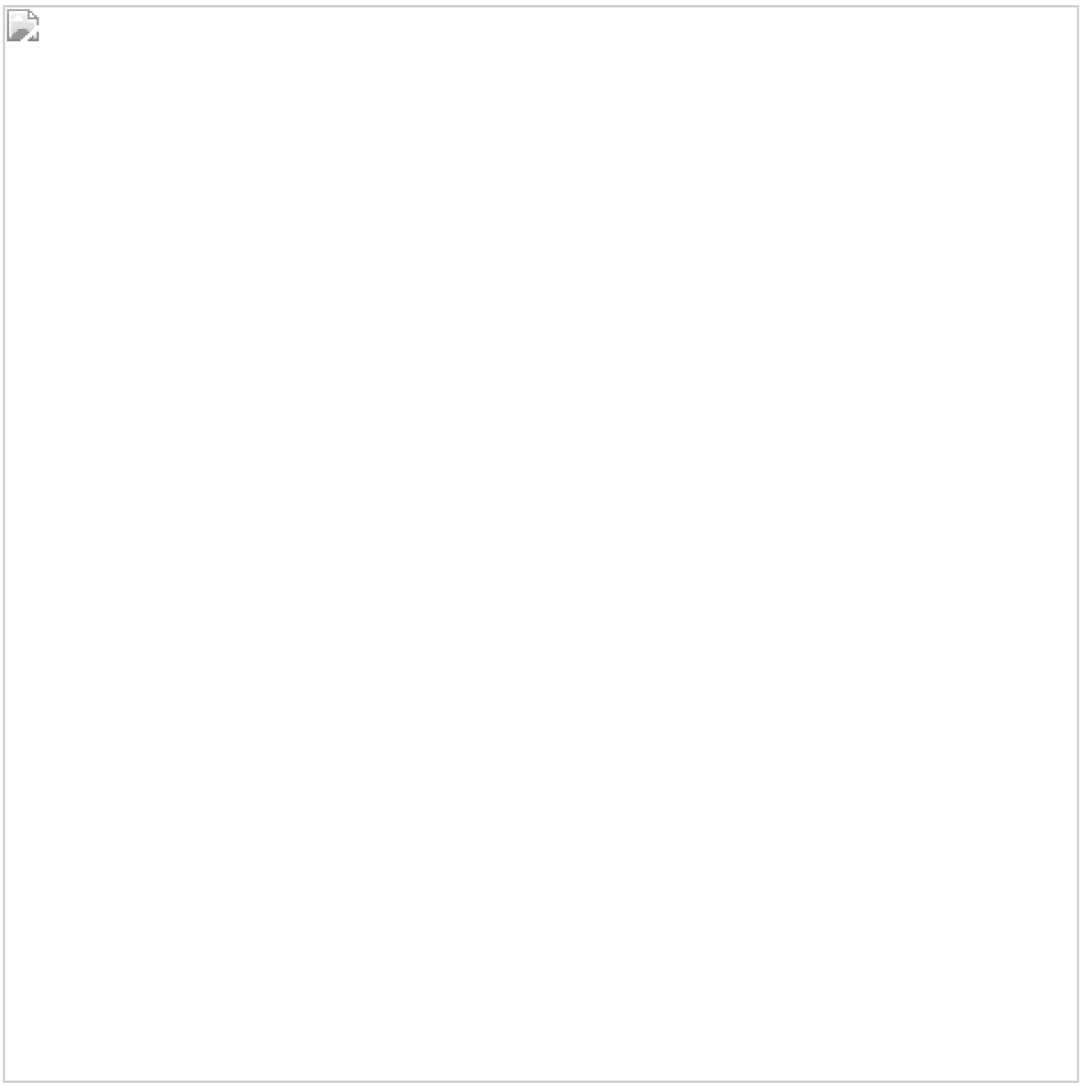
The next day Jo and Laurie went skating on the river. Amy came after them. Laurie called, “Keep near the shore. It isn’t safe in the middle.”

Jo heard it, but she was still angry and did not turn around. Then there was a cry behind her. Amy had fallen through the ice.

Jo and Laurie pulled her out with a fence rail, and wrapped her in warm coats. Amy was safe. Later Amy said, “Please forgive me, Jo. I’m very, very sorry.”

TALK ABOUT IT

Why do you think Jo did not turn around at first? What would you do if you were Jo?



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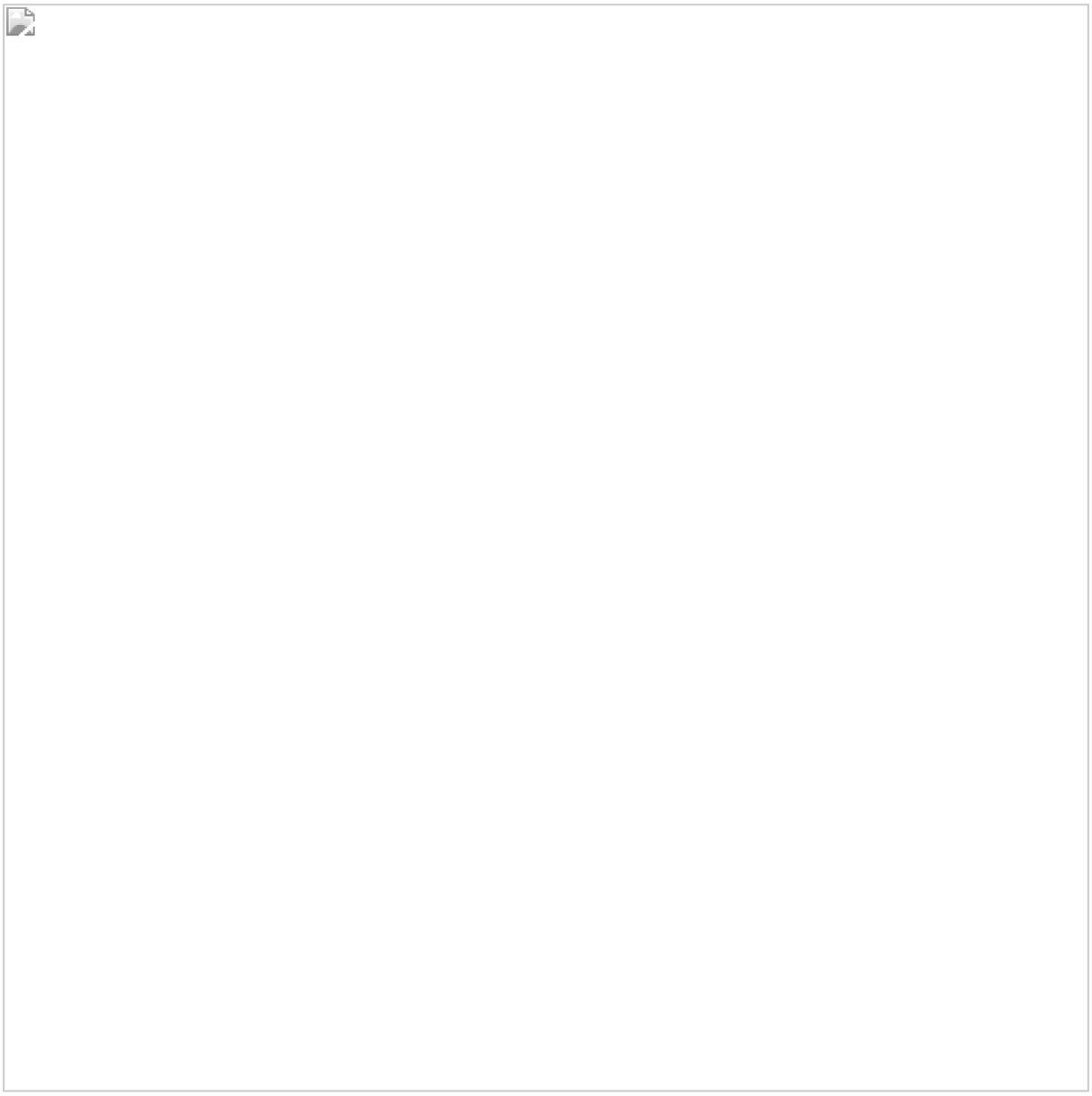
Don’t Let the Sun Go Down



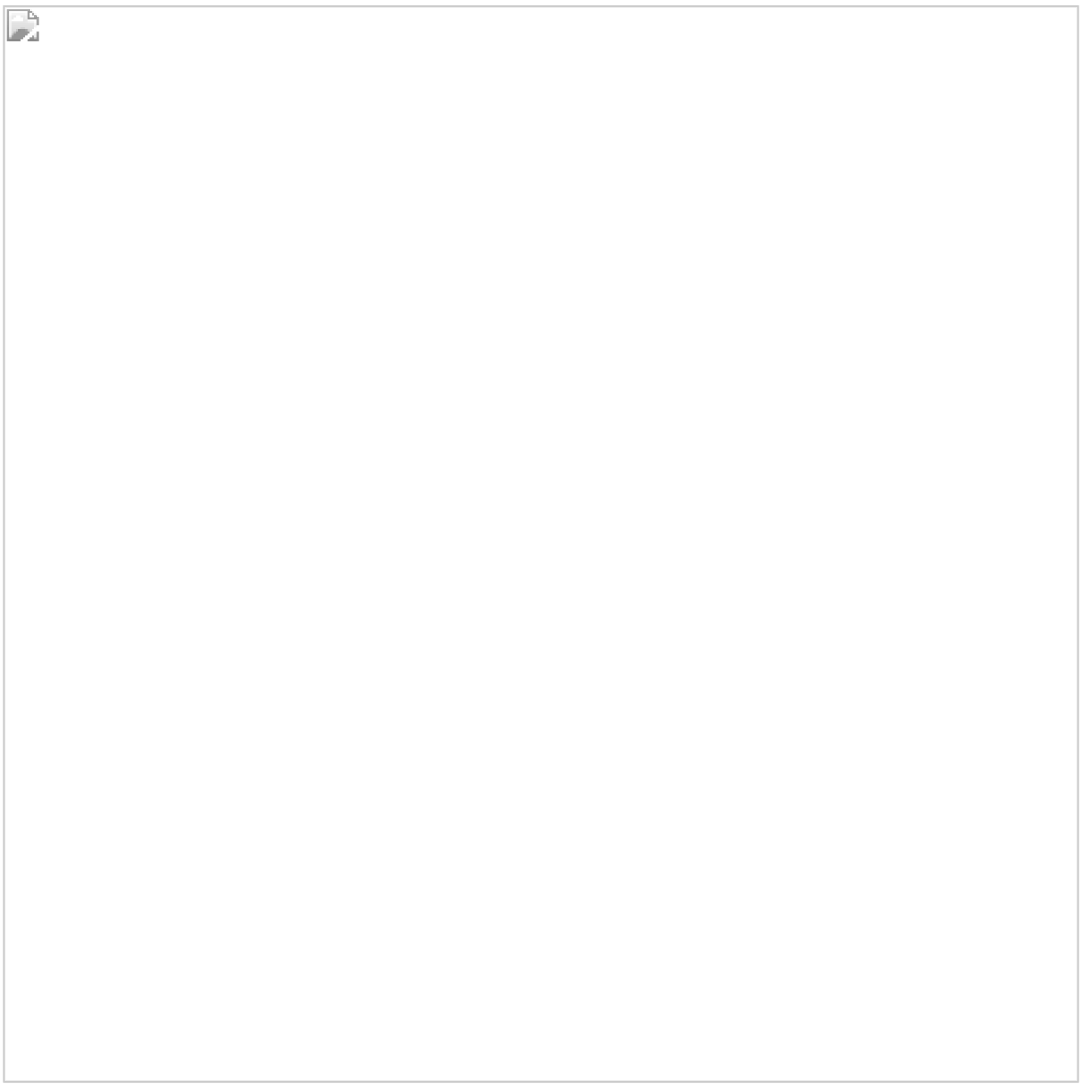
Jo told her mother everything. She was sorry about her temper. Marmee held her and said she was angry almost every day, but she had learned to keep it in check.

Marmee told her, “My dear, don’t let the sun go down upon your anger.” She said to forgive each other and begin again tomorrow.

Then Jo and Amy hugged, and the quarrel was forgiven and forgotten in one hearty kiss.

TALK ABOUT IT

What helps you when you are very cross? How do you say sorry?



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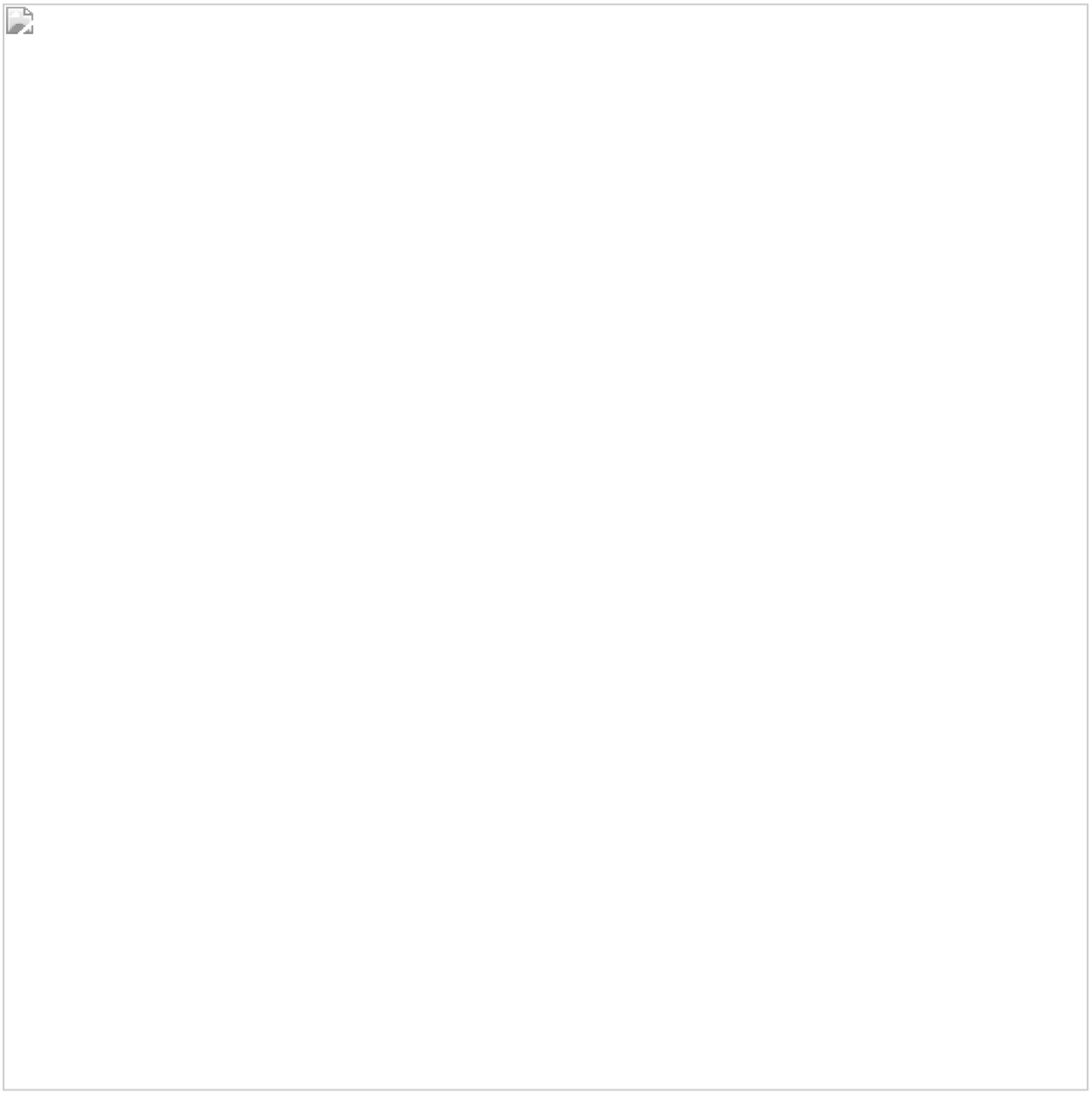
Meg at Vanity Fair



Meg went to stay with her friend Annie Moffat. The Moffats had many pretty things. They dressed Meg up in a fancy gown and curled her hair, like a doll.

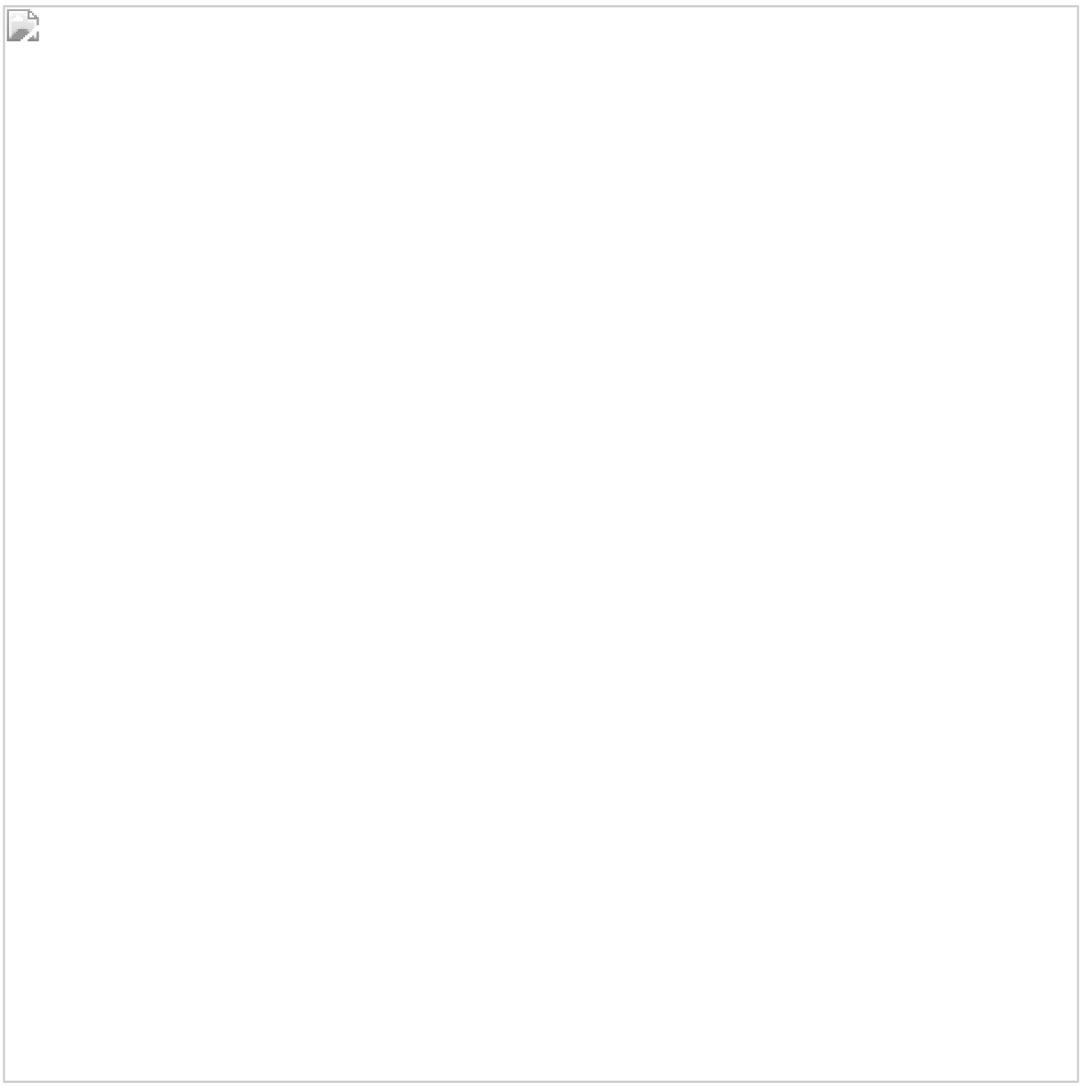
When Laurie saw her he did not smile. “I don’t like fuss and feathers,” he said.

Meg went home and told her mother everything. Marmee said she would rather see her girls happy than rich.

TALK ABOUT IT

Why might Meg have wanted to look like the others? Have you ever wanted to be different from how you are?

Meg at Vanity Fair · another picture



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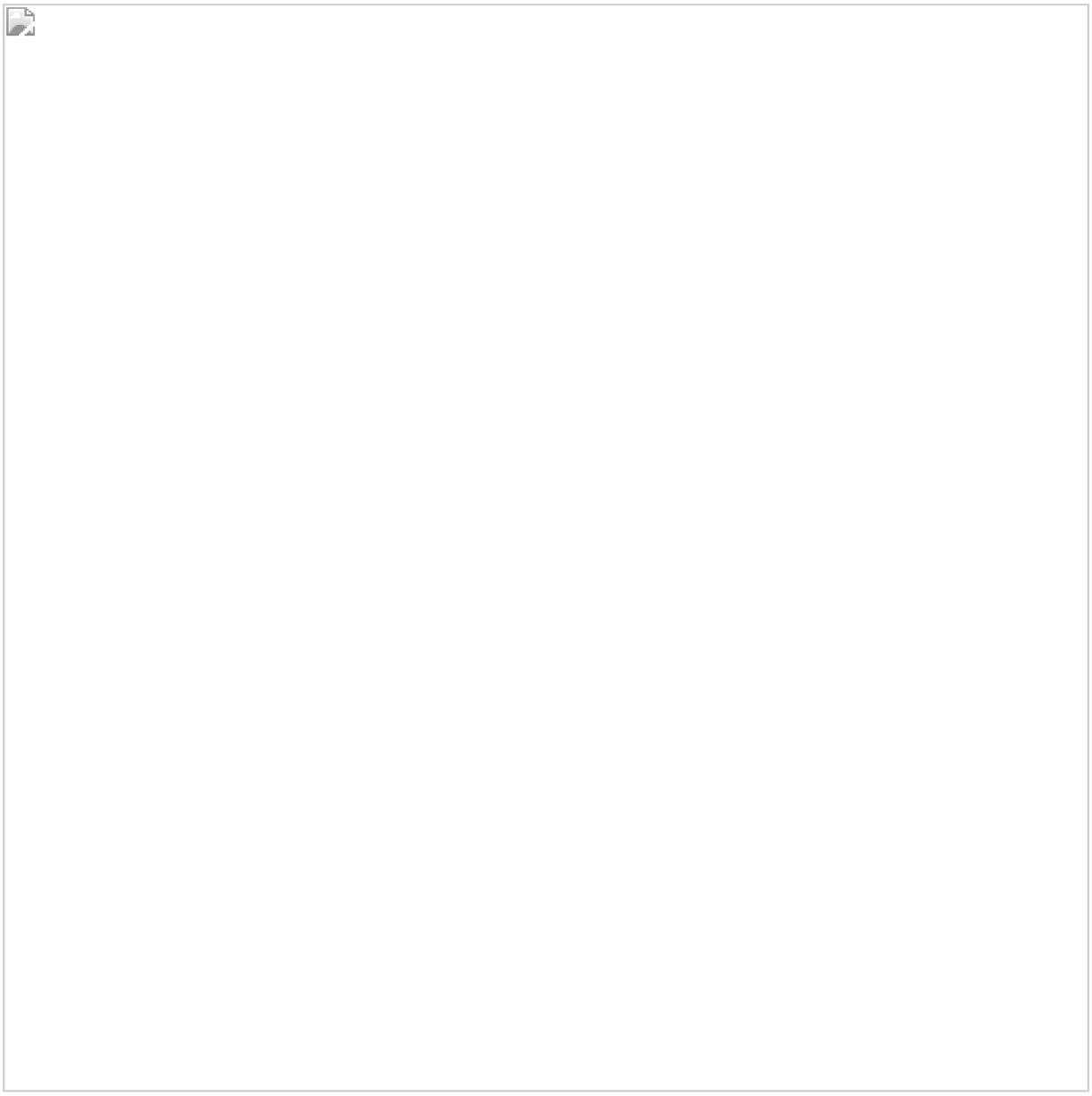
The Telegram



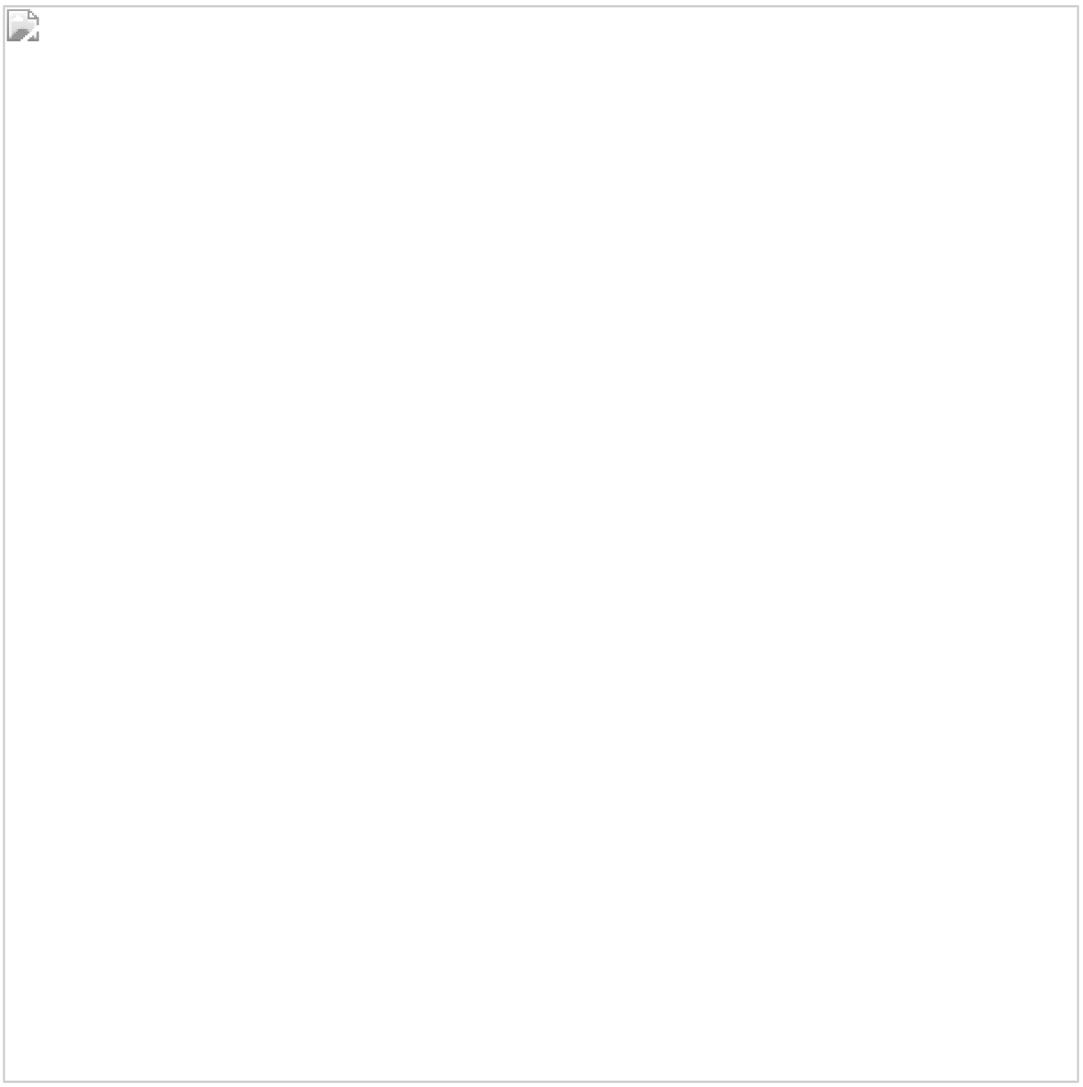
One gray November day a telegram came. It said, “Your husband is very ill. Come at once.”

Marmee had to go to Father at the hospital in Washington. She needed money for the trip, and the girls hurried to help.

Jo cut off her long hair and sold it for twenty-five dollars. She put the money in Marmee’s hand and said, “That’s my contribution toward making Father comfortable and bringing him home!”

TALK ABOUT IT

Why do you think Jo gave up her hair? What would you give to help your family?



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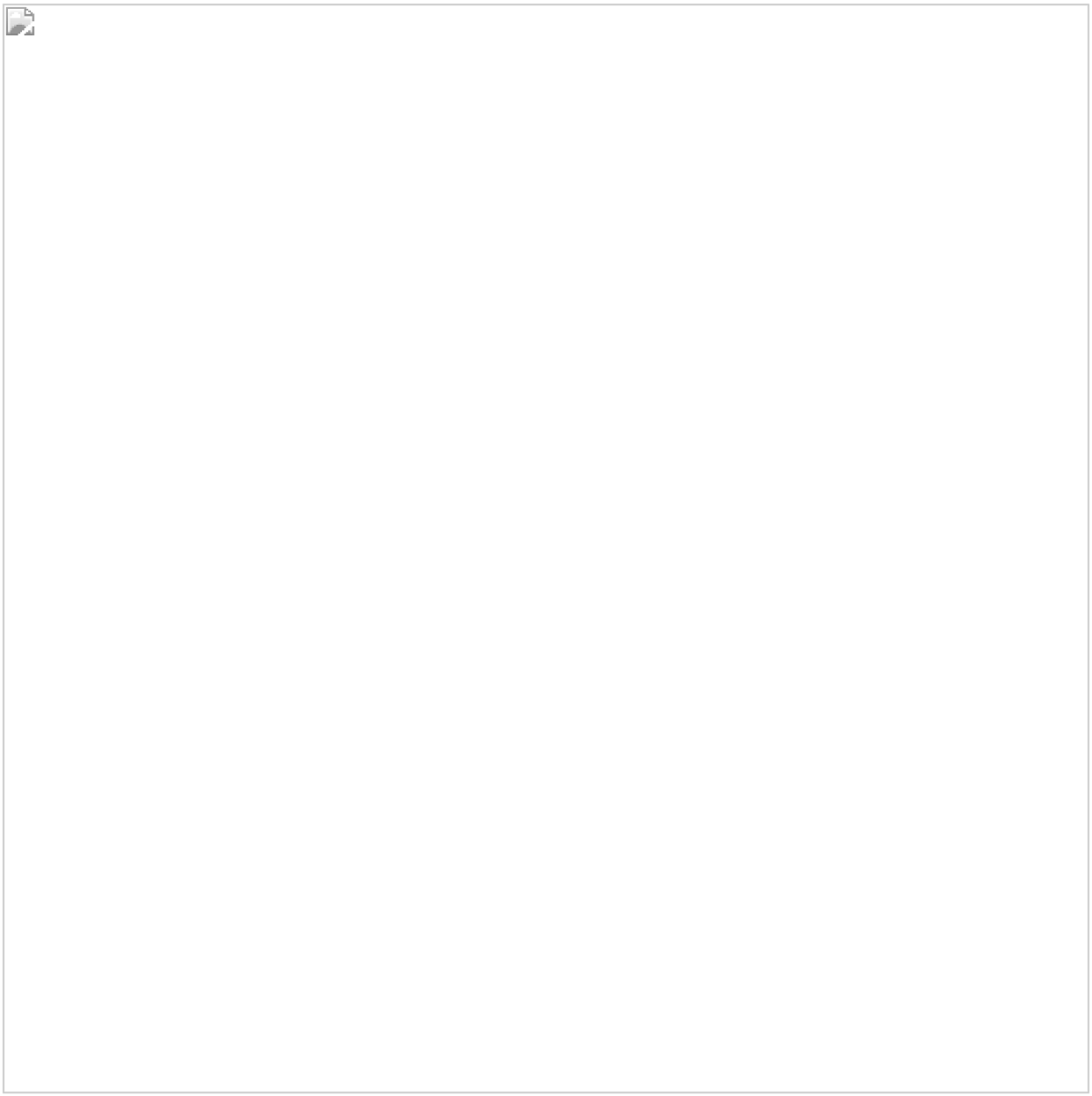
Beth Is Sick



With Marmee gone, the girls took care of the house. Beth went to visit the poor Hummel children. The littlest baby was sick, and the baby died in Beth's lap. Beth caught the fever too.

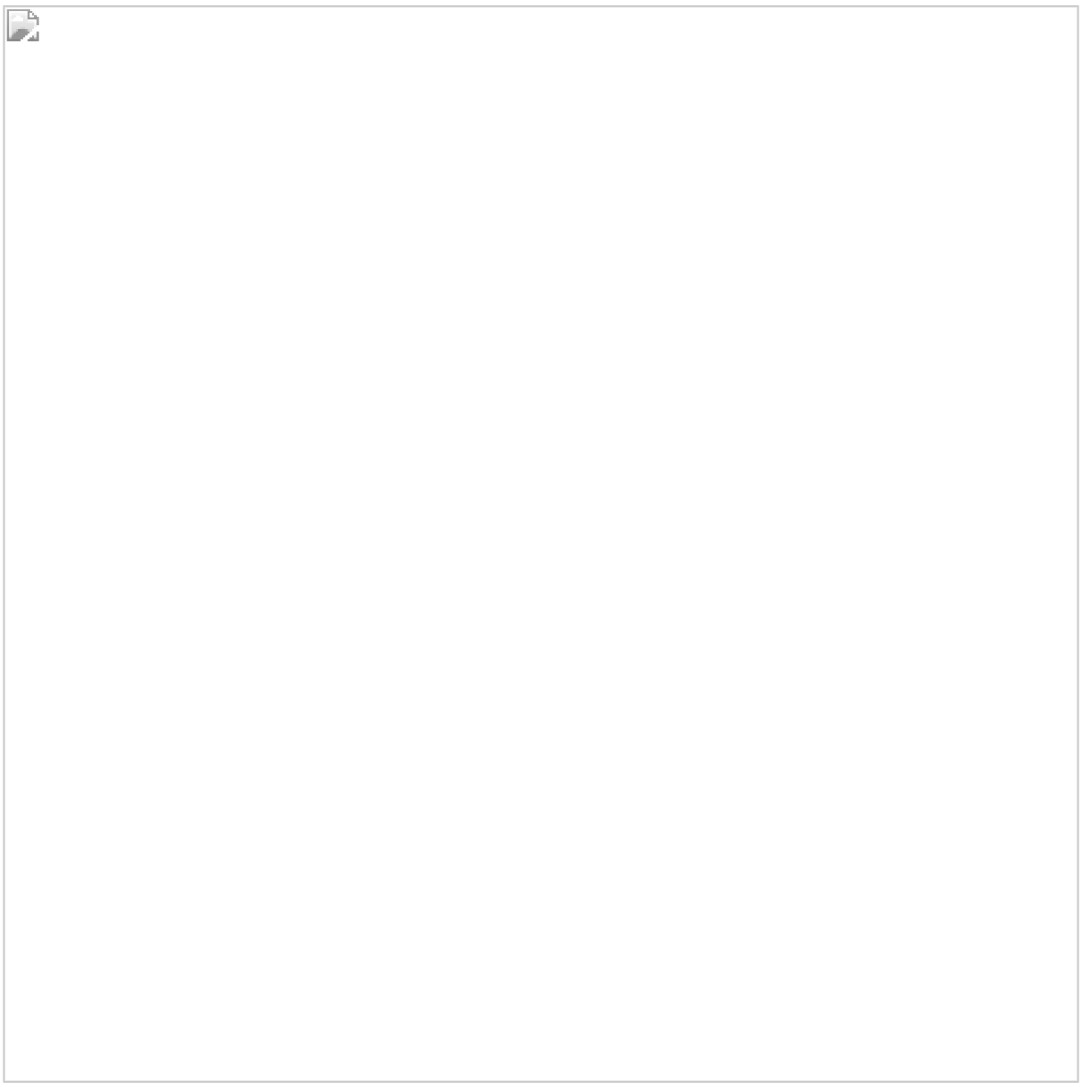
Dr. Bangs came and said it was scarlet fever. Amy was sent away to Aunt March's so that she would not catch it.

Beth grew very ill. Jo and Meg took turns sitting up with her all night.

TALK ABOUT IT

What would help you feel better when you were sick? What do you think Jo and Meg did all night?

Beth Is Sick · another picture



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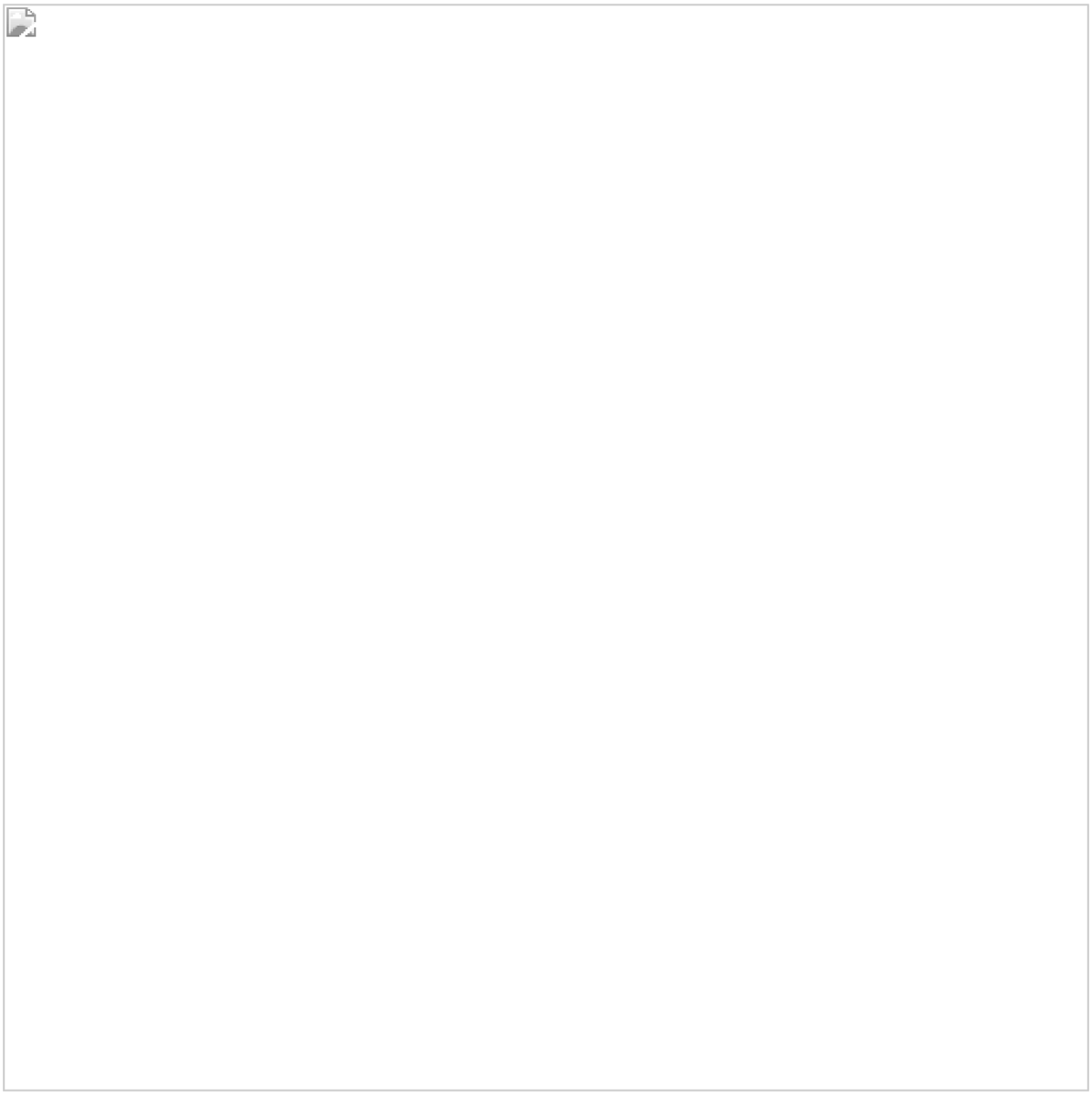
Marmee Comes Home



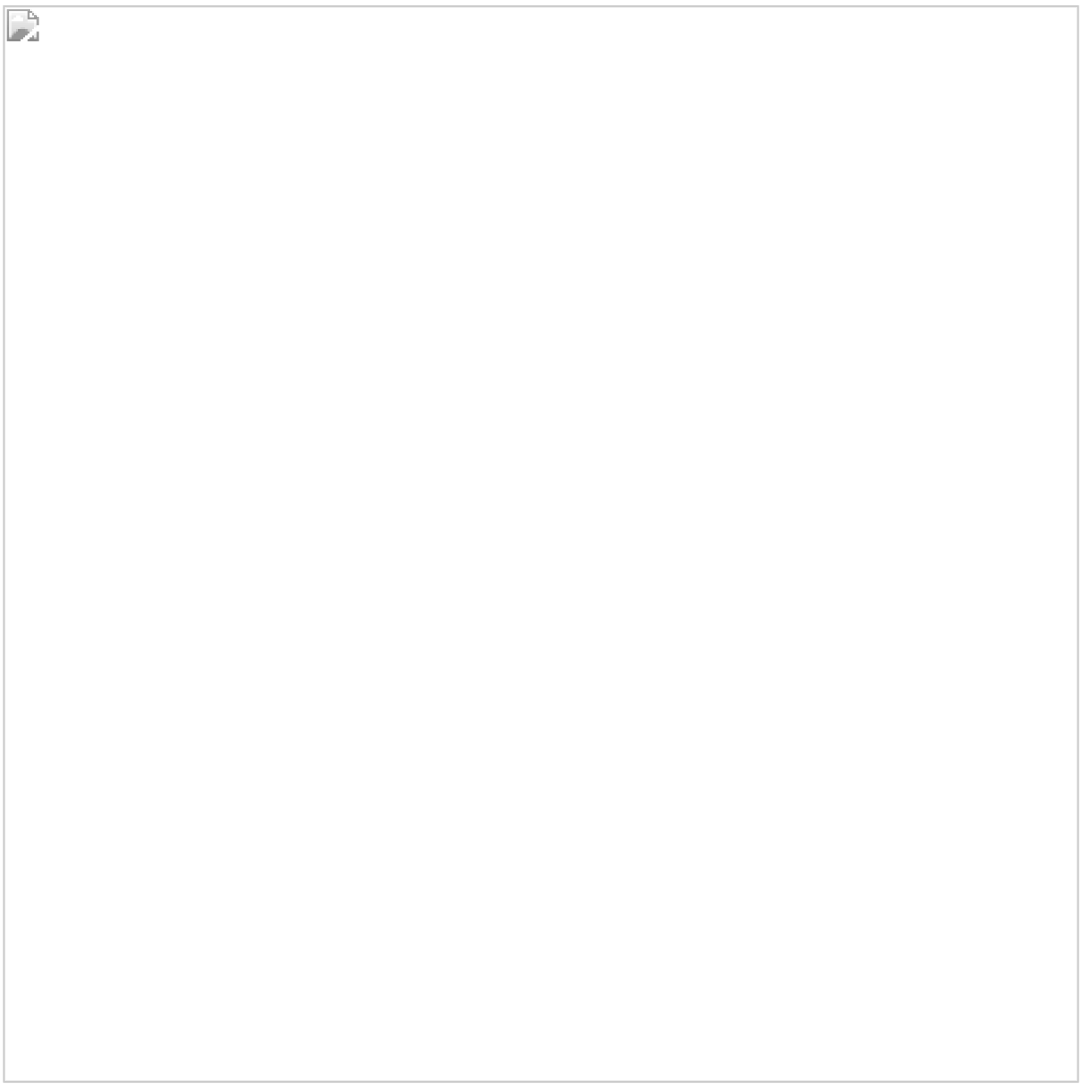
Word was sent to Marmee. In the long night, Beth lay still, and the girls waited by her bed. Then Hannah woke, felt Beth's hands, and said under her breath, "The fever's turned, she's sleepin' nat'ral," and everyone breathed again.

Then there was a sound of bells at the door. Laurie's voice said in a joyful whisper, "Girls, she's come! She's come!"

Marmee was home. When Beth woke from her long sleep, the first thing she saw was her mother's face, and she smiled.

TALK ABOUT IT

What do you think the house sounded like when the bells rang? What do you do when you are very glad?



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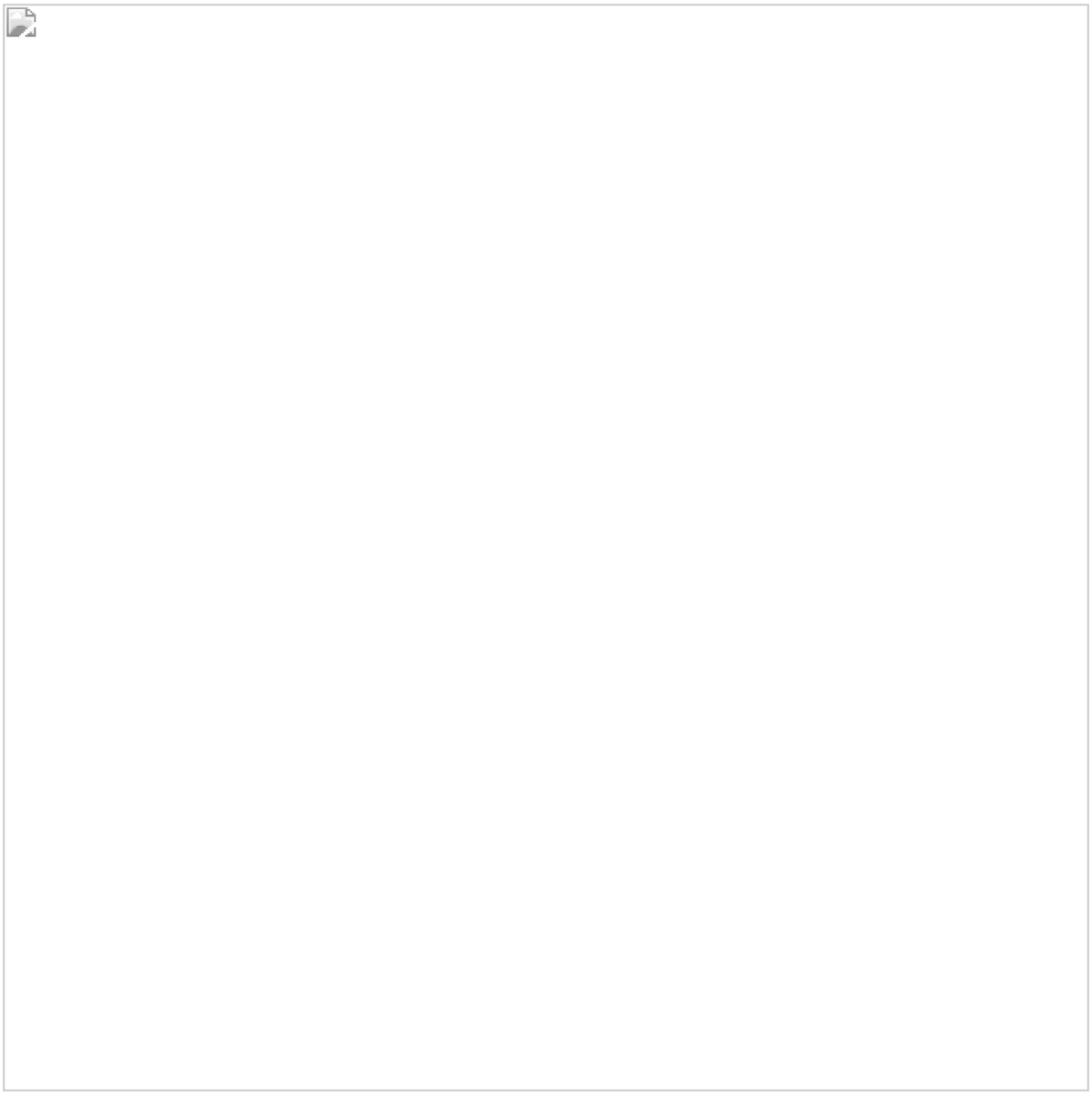
Father Comes Home



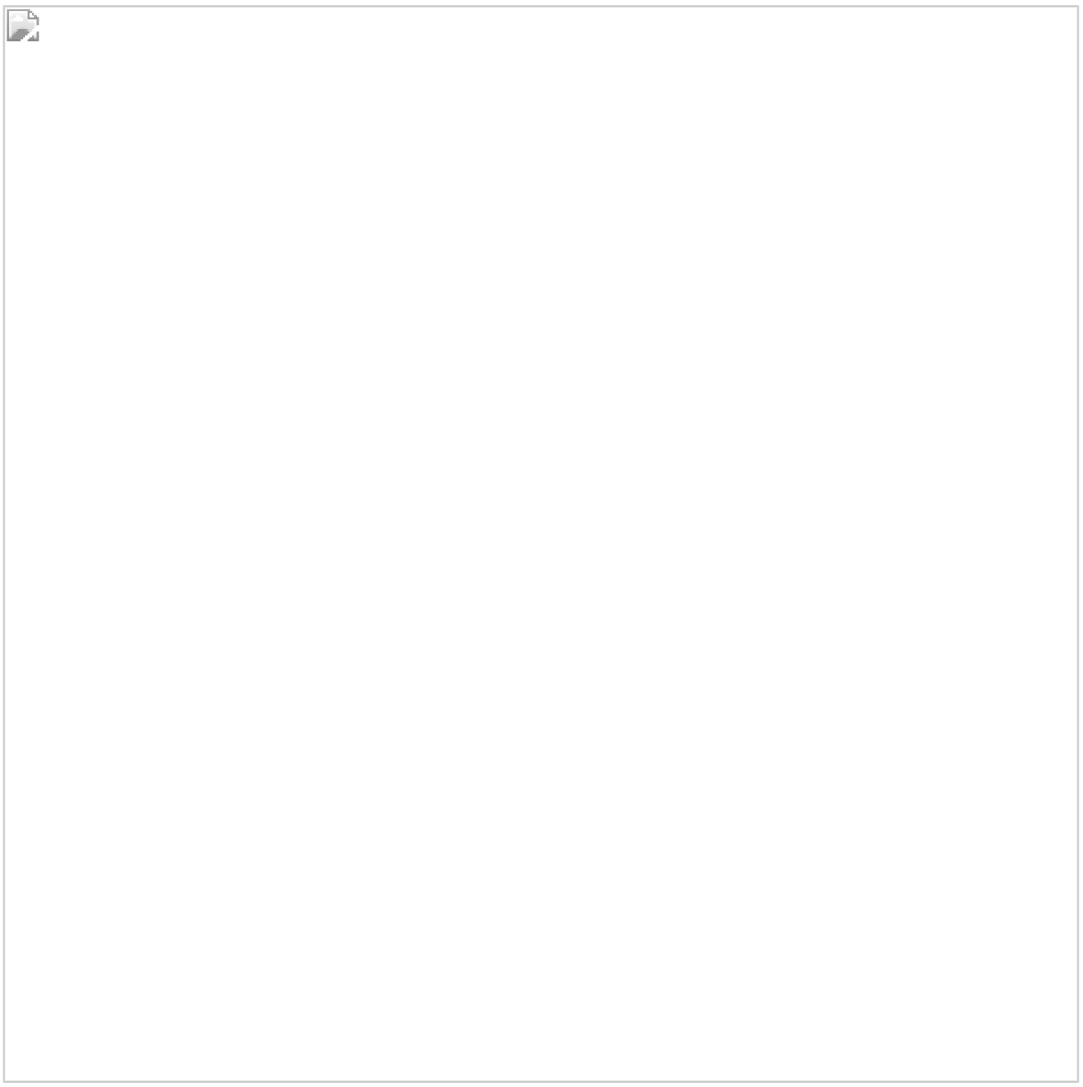
On Christmas Day, Beth was getting well. The girls said they were so happy they could not hold one drop more. Just then, Laurie opened the parlor door and said, “Here’s another Christmas present for the March family.”

In walked Father, leaning on Mr. Brooke. Everyone ran to hug him. Beth ran into his arms in her red wrapper.

Father held her close and said, “I’ve got you safe, my Beth, and I’ll keep you so, please God.”

TALK ABOUT IT

What would you say to someone who had been away a long time? What do you think Father felt when Beth ran to him?



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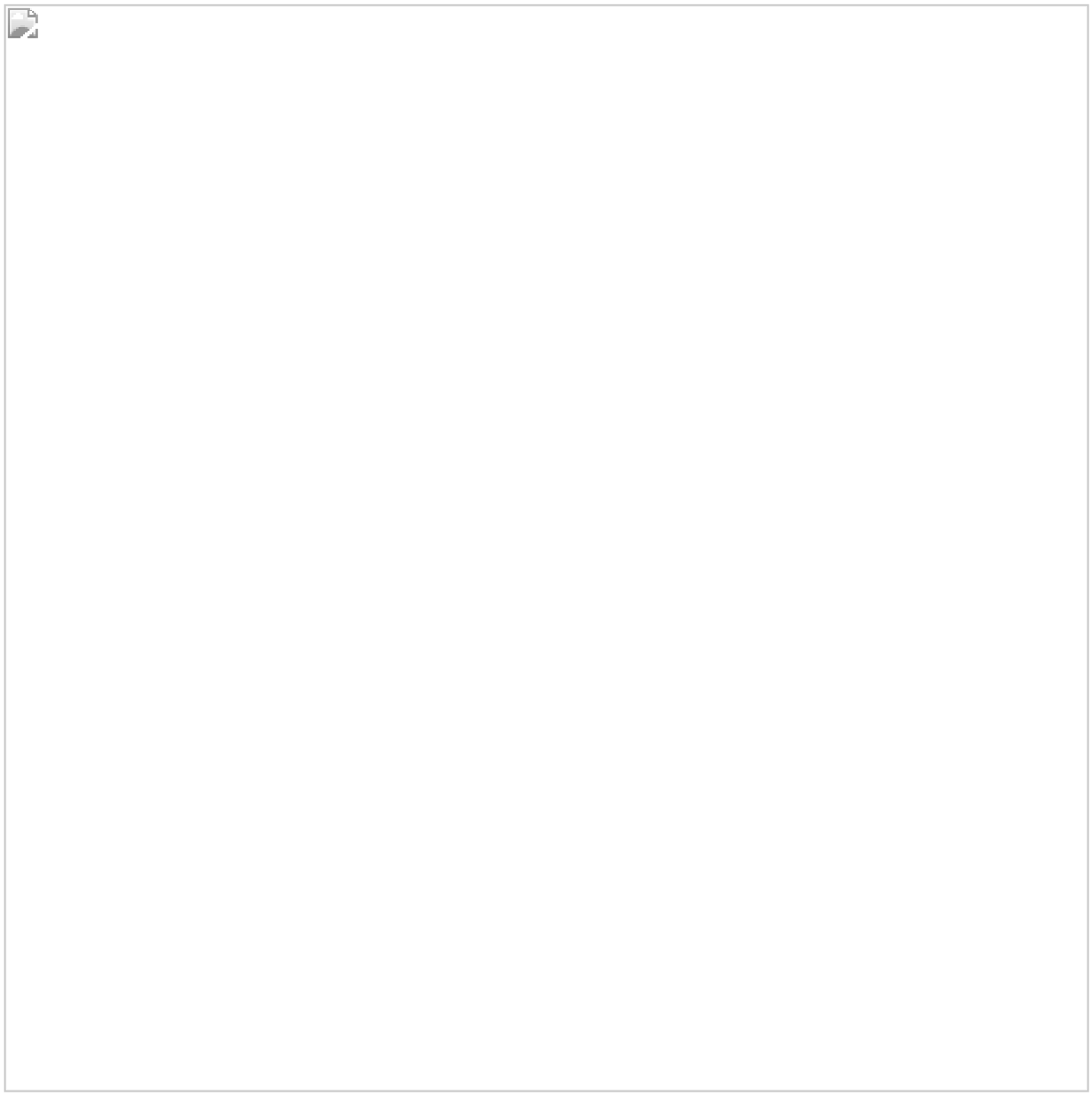
The Curtain Falls



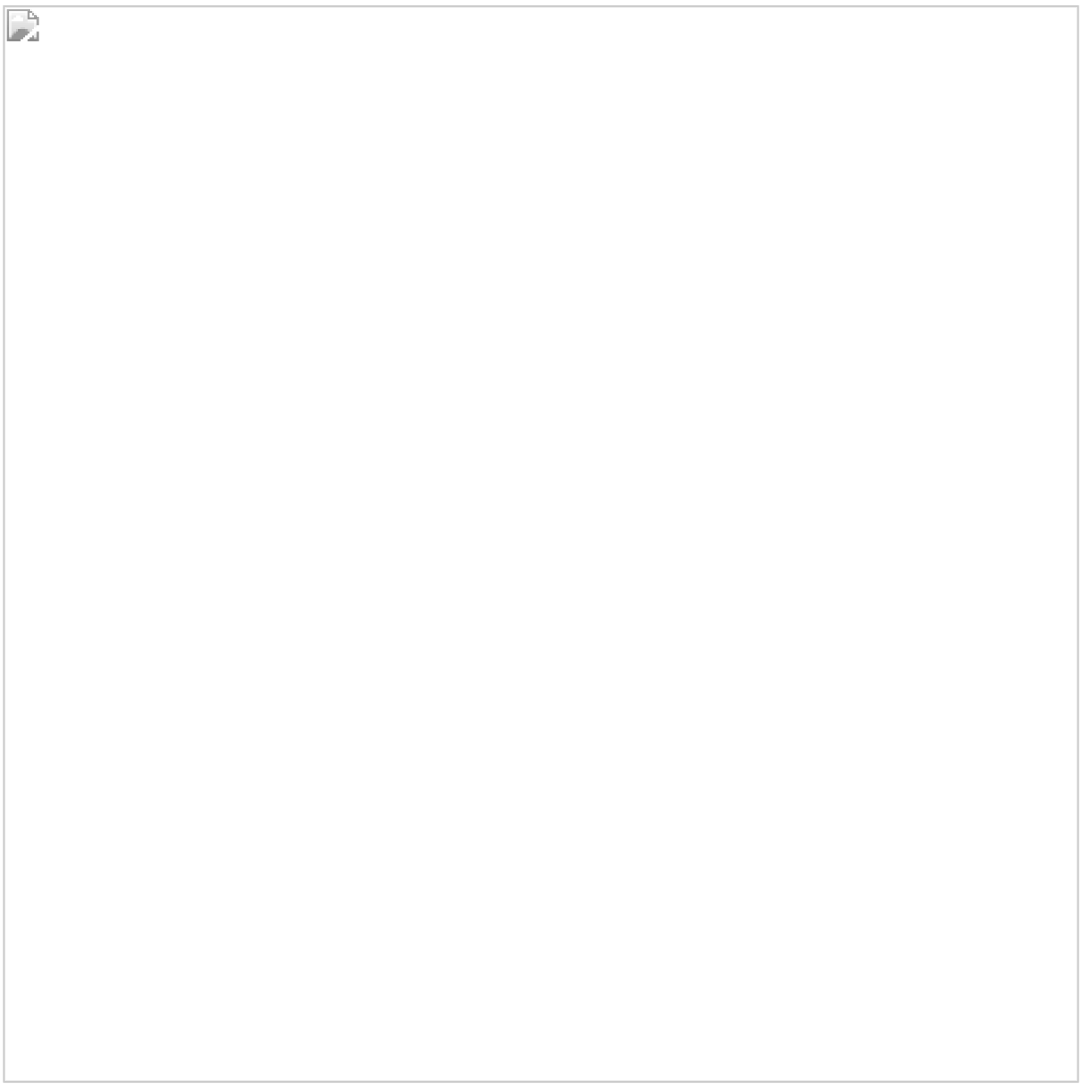
Meg had come to love John Brooke. Old Aunt March said that if she married him, not one penny would come to her. Meg stood up straight. “I shall marry whom I please, Aunt March.”

When Aunt March had gone, Meg whispered, “Yes, John.” Jo came in and found them together. Mr. Brooke laughed: “Sister Jo, congratulate us!”

One evening the family sat in the parlor. Father and Mother sat quietly together. Beth lay on her sofa. Jo sat in her favorite low seat, and Laurie smiled at her over the back of her chair. So the curtain falls upon Meg, Jo, Beth, and Amy.

TALK ABOUT IT

Who is in the room where you feel most at home? Who would you want to sit near in that parlor?



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

— Yeshua HaMashiach

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