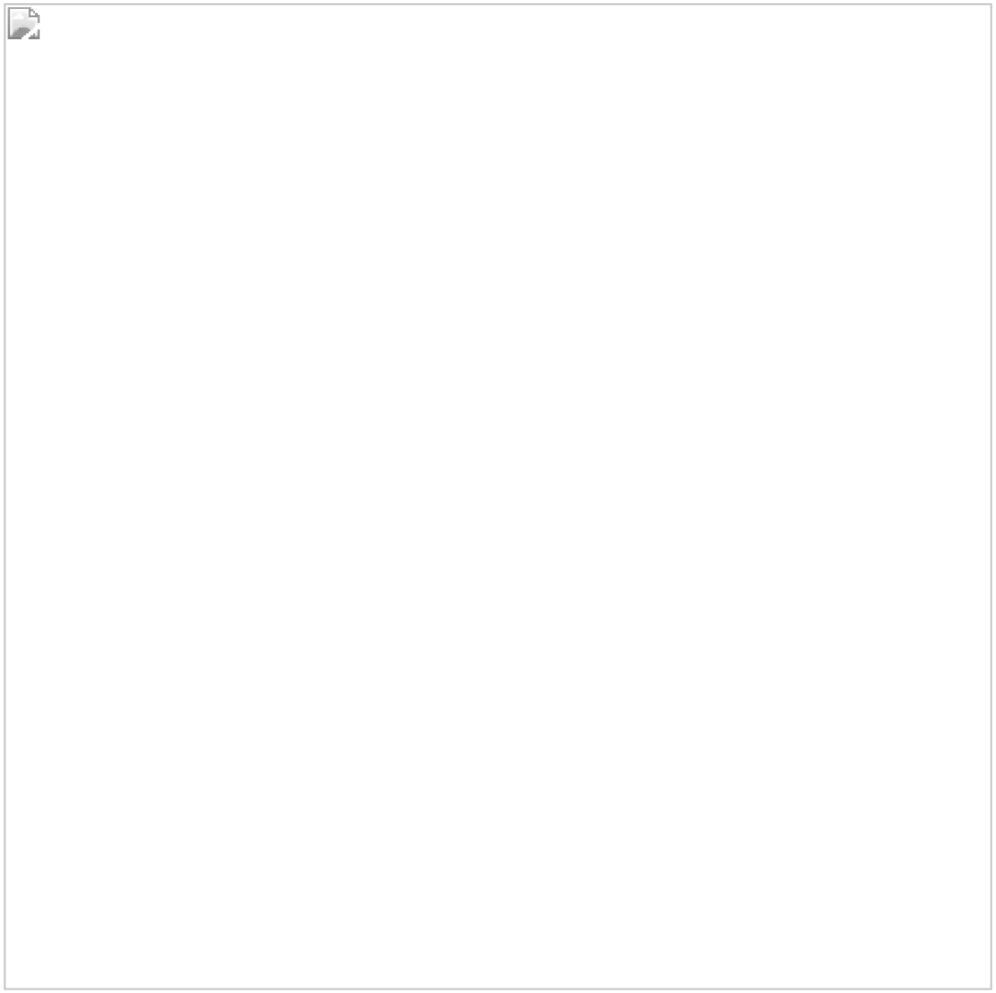
COLORING THE CLASSICS

The Cricket on the Hearth

A Fairy Tale of Home



“The kettle began it!” On a cold, foggy evening, in a snug little kitchen, Mrs. Peerybingle set the kettle on the fire. It huffed and bubbled, and then it began to sing.

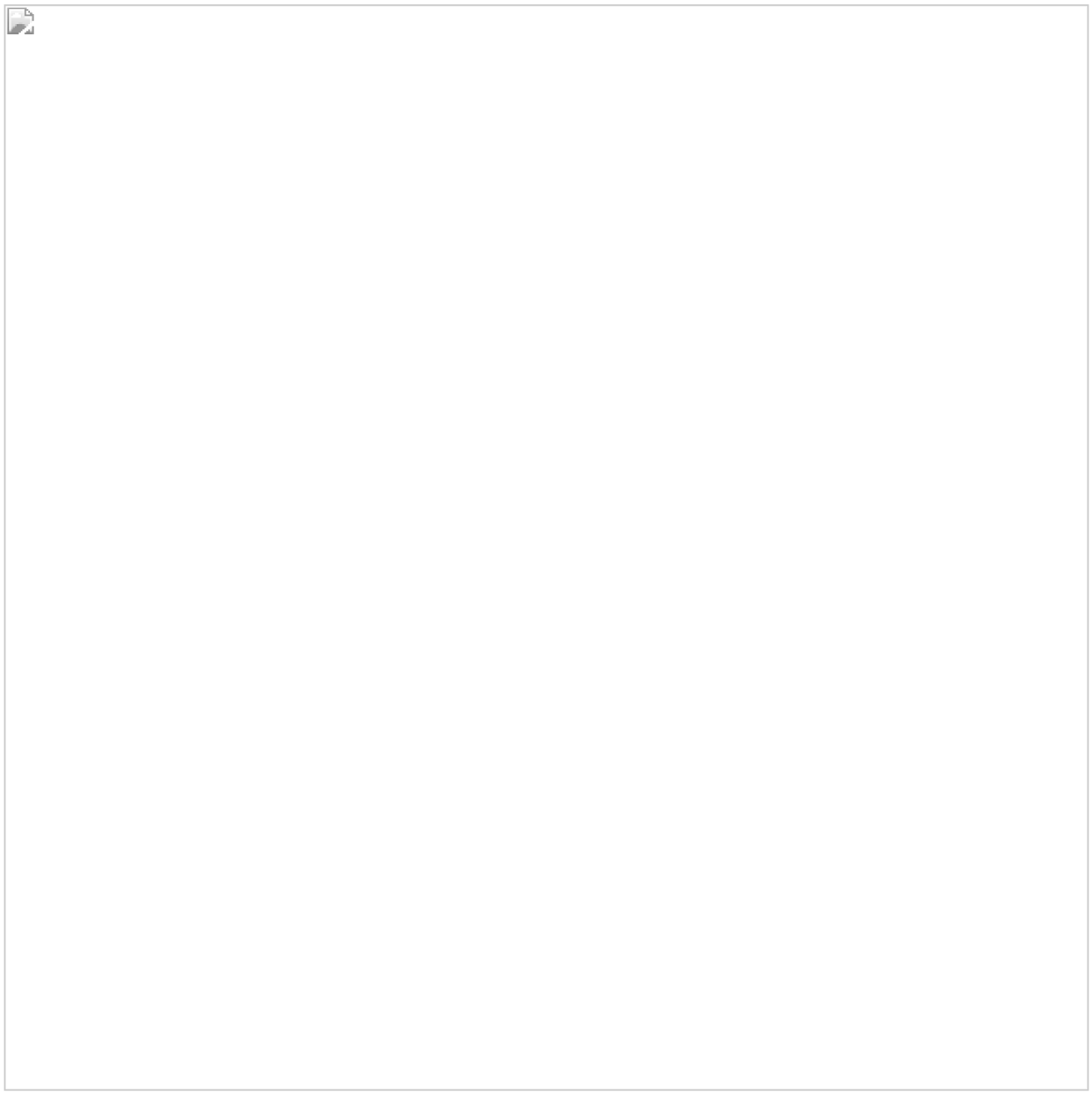
And soon the Cricket on the hearth joined in.

TALK ABOUT IT

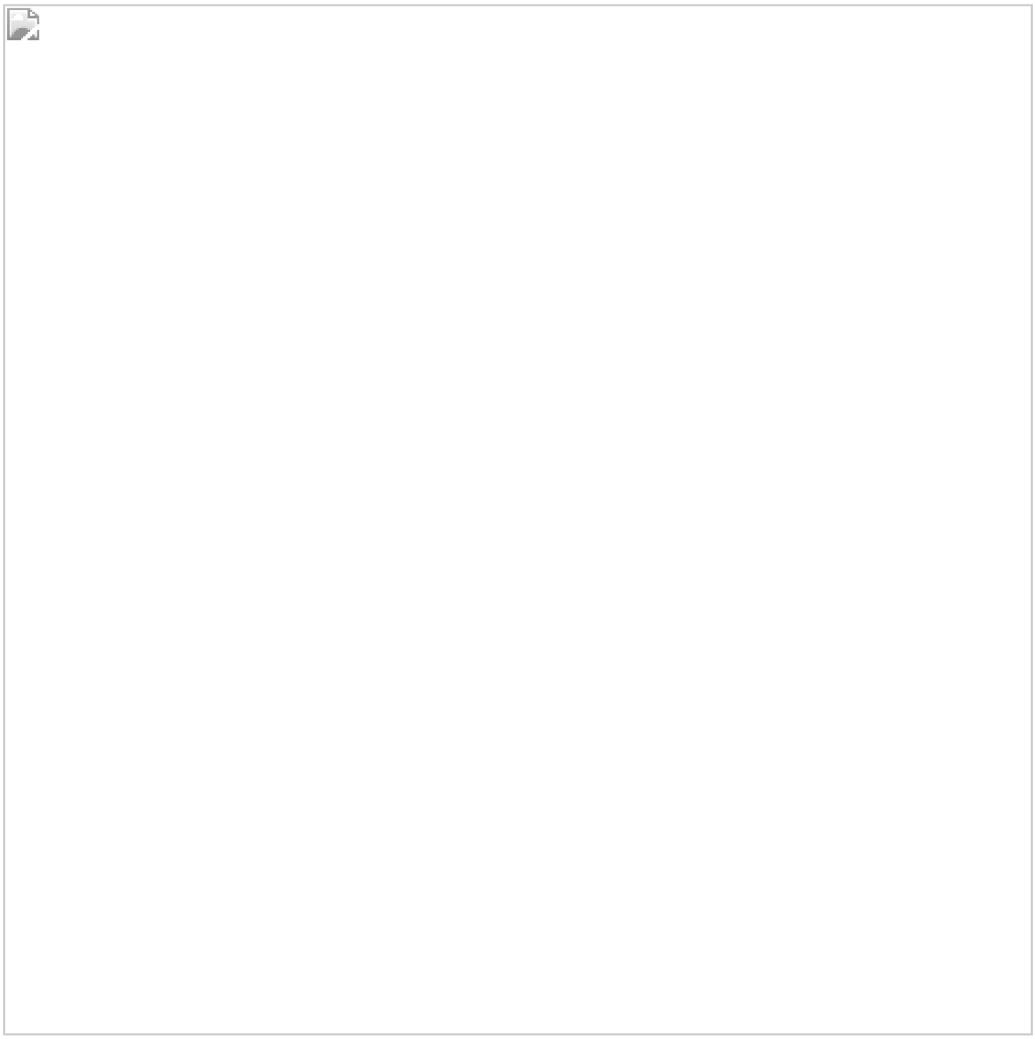
A singing kettle and a chirping Cricket by the fire. What sounds make a place feel like home to you?

This book belongs to _____

The Cricket on the Hearth · another picture



Chirp, Chirp, Chirp!



Mrs. Peerybingle, whom everybody called Dot, was small and cheerful. She was waiting for her husband John, the Carrier, who drove his cart from town to town with parcels.

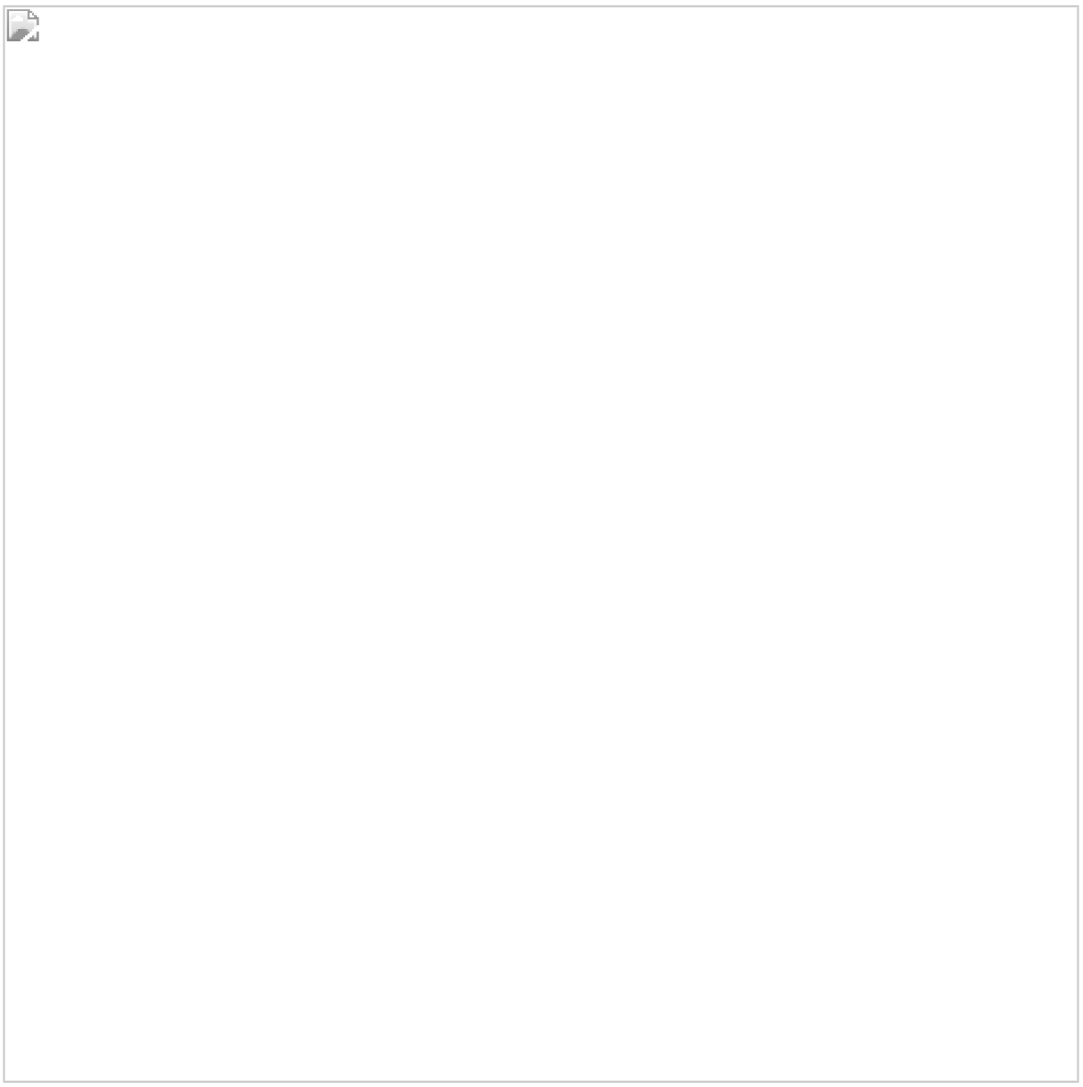
The kettle sang that somebody was on his way home through the dark: “he’s coming, coming, coming!” Then the Cricket chirped, and the two raced each other, louder and louder.

Their song streamed out of the window and down the lane. It seemed to call: “Welcome home, old fellow! Welcome home, my boy!”

Dot ran to the door. There came wheels, a horse, and a dog named Boxer, barking and tearing in and out.

TALK ABOUT IT

The kettle and the Cricket both seemed to say welcome home. Who is glad to see you when you come home?

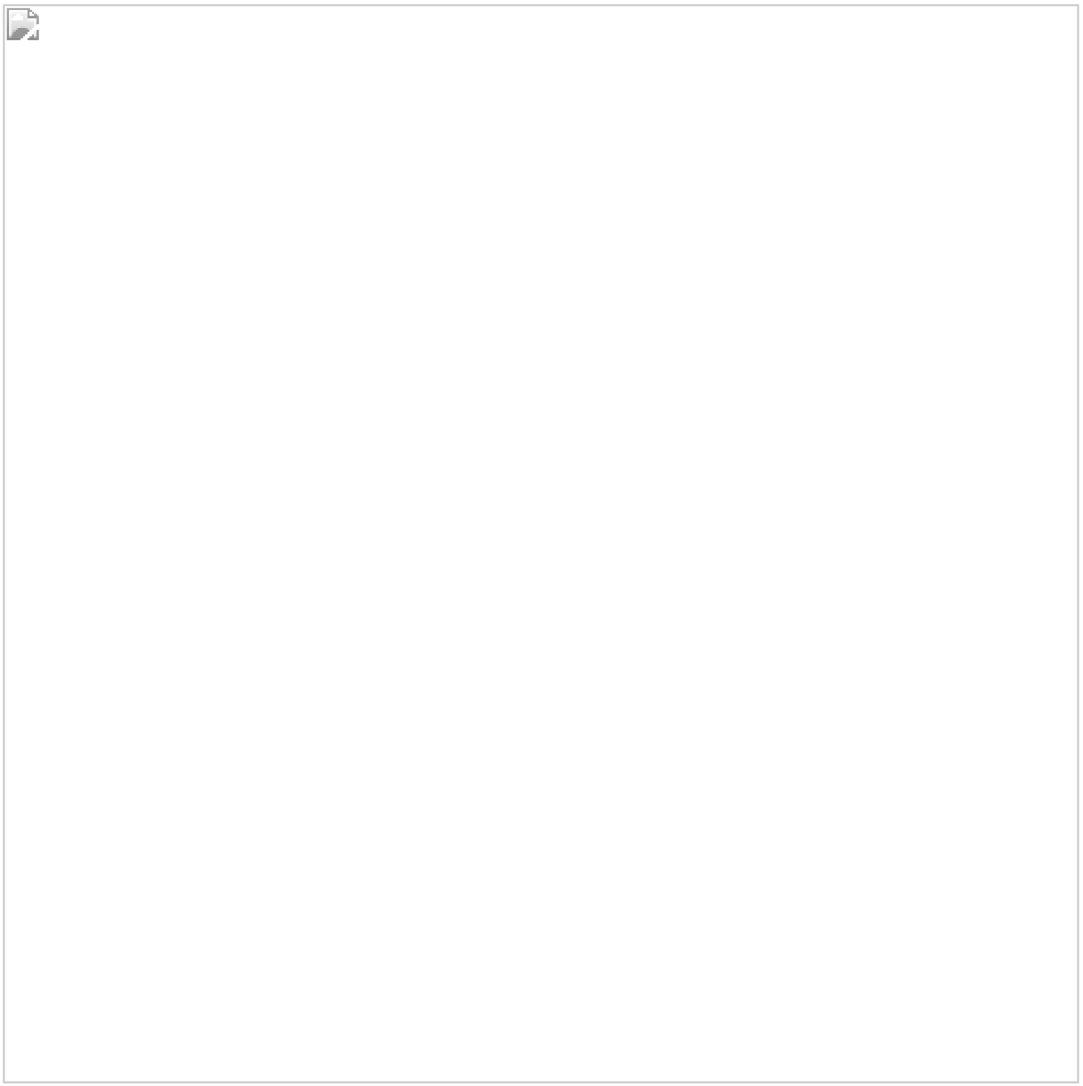


Think about it

1. What did the kettle and the Cricket do?

- ○ Sang a welcome for someone coming home
- ○ Fell asleep by the fire
- ○ Ran out the door

A Happy Home



In came John, a big, slow, kind man,. Dickens says he was “so rough upon the surface, but so gentle at the core.” They had a new baby boy.

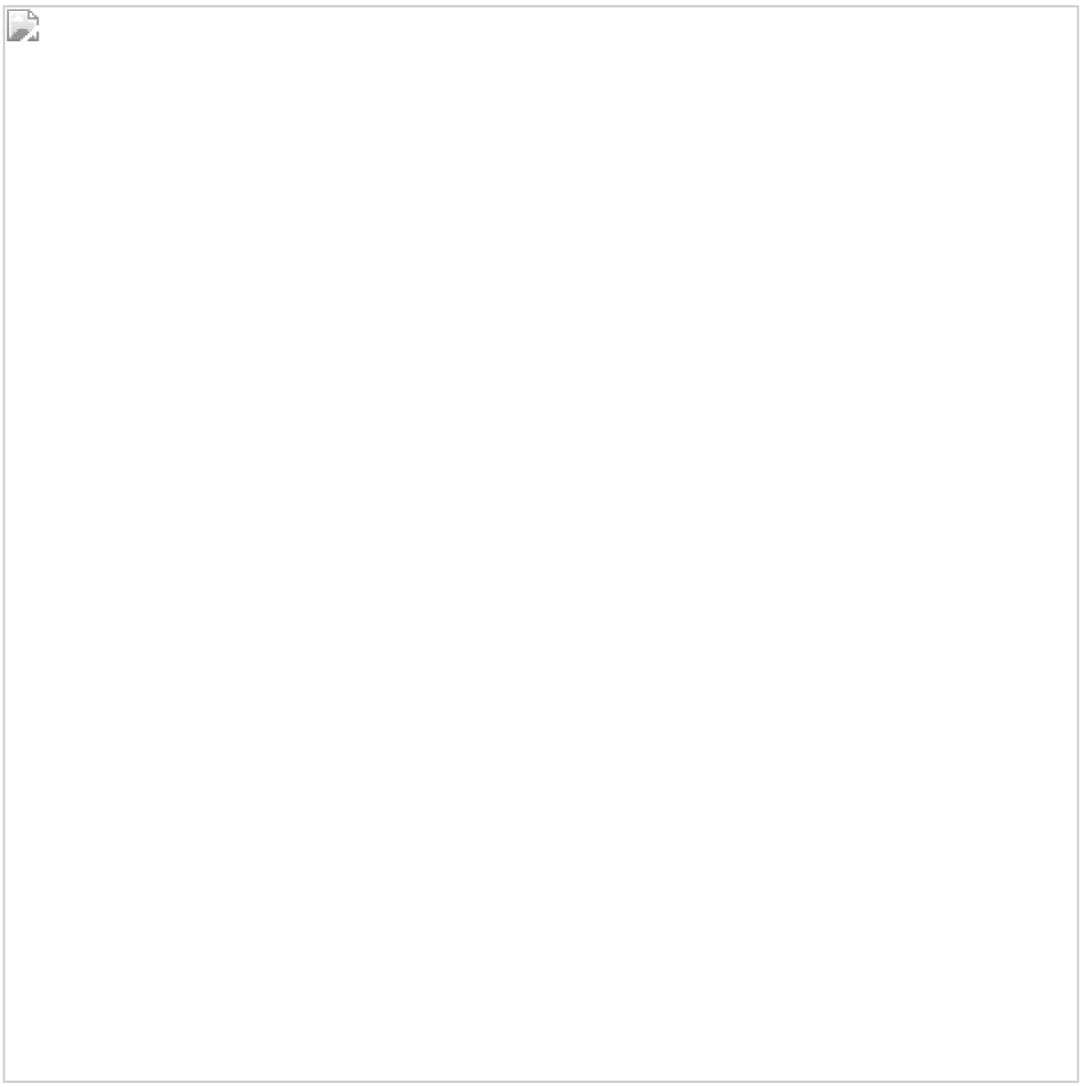
Dot told John about the Cricket. “To have a Cricket on the Hearth, is the luckiest thing in all the world!” “This has been a happy home, John; and I love the Cricket for its sake!”

“So do I, Dot,” said John.

Then Dot found a wedding cake among the parcels, for Mr. Tackleton the toymaker, who was going to marry her old school friend May. Dot stopped smiling. The Cricket stopped chirping.

TALK ABOUT IT

Dot loved the Cricket because it reminded her of happy times. What little things remind you of happy times?

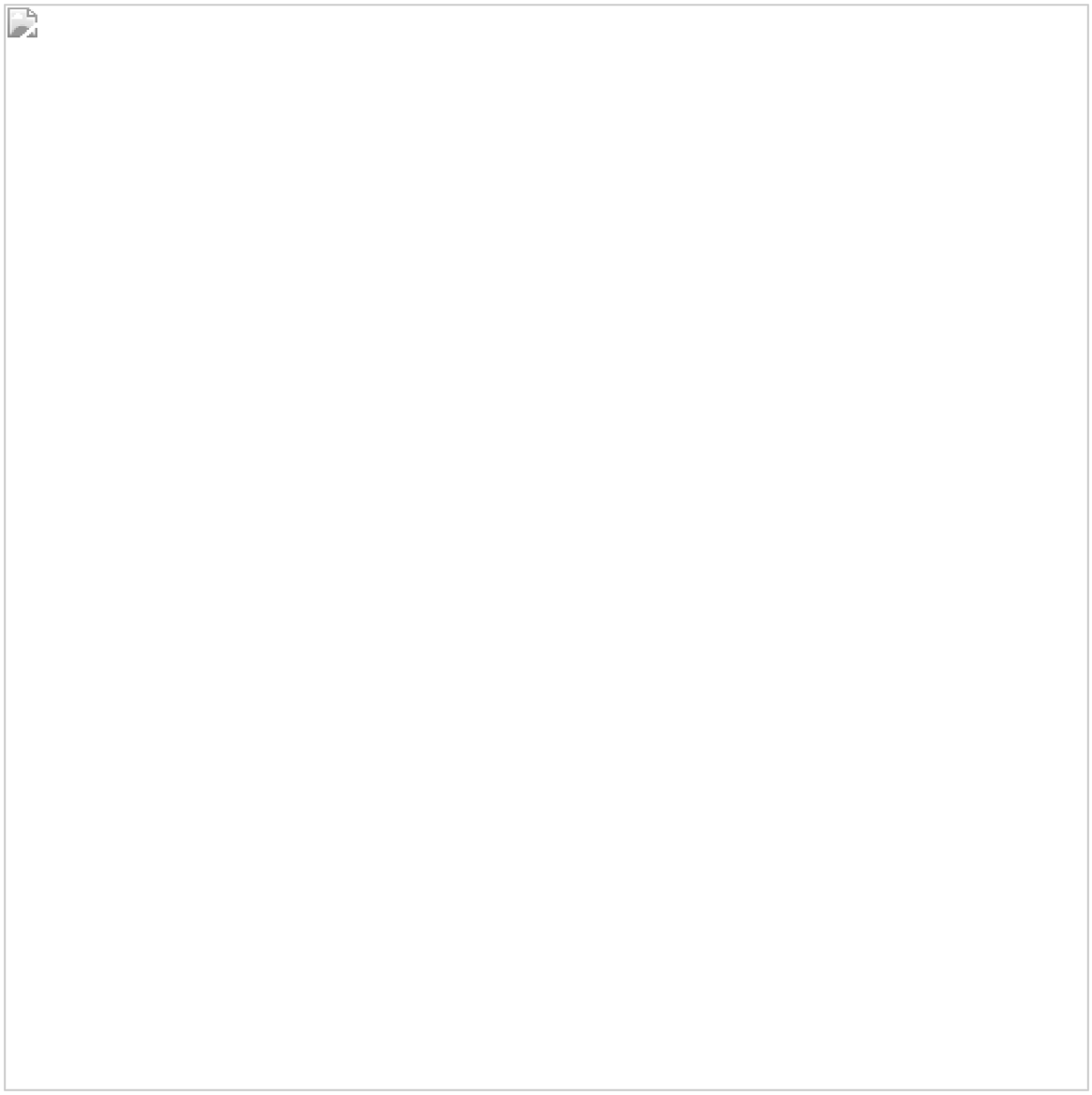


Think about it

1. Who was the wedding cake for?

- ○ Mr. Tackleton
- ○ Boxer the dog
- ○ The Cricket

The Old Gentleman in the Cart



“Oh!” cried John. “I've clean forgotten the old gentleman!” He had given a stranger a ride. The old man had long white hair and bright, dark eyes. His walking stick folded up into a chair, and he sat on it.

“If you please, I was to be left till called for,” he said.

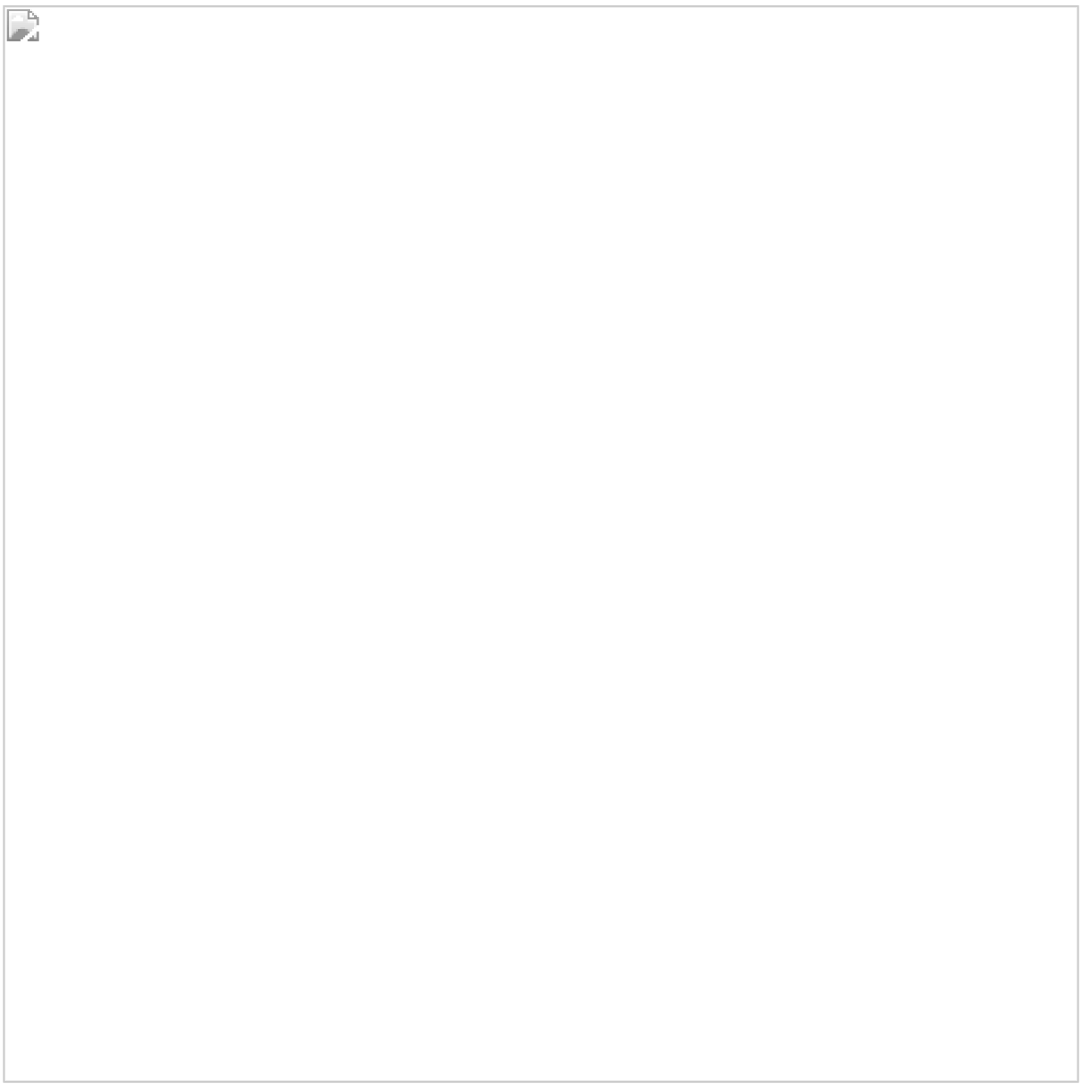
Then Caleb Plummer, a little toymaker, looked in for a parcel: a box of dolls' eyes for his daughter Bertha's work.

Bertha was blind. “I wish it was her own sight in a box, John,” said Caleb. John wished so too, with all his heart.

TALK ABOUT IT

Caleb wished so hard that his daughter could see. How do you think he felt?

The Old Gentleman in the Cart · another picture

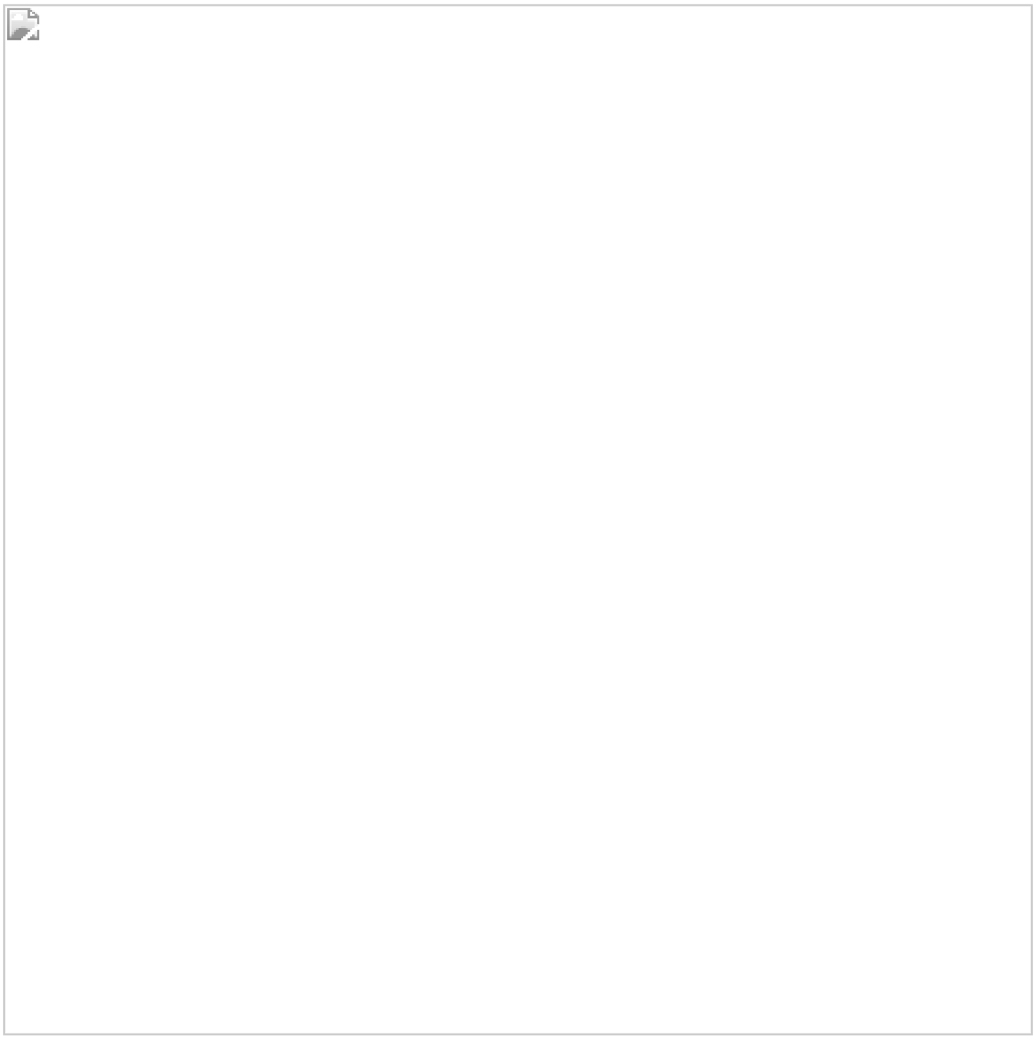


Think about it

1. What did the old gentleman's walking stick turn into?

- ○ A fishing rod
- ○ A chair
- ○ A flower

Mr. Tackleton



Then Mr. Tackleton came in. He was a sour, grumpy toy-merchant who did not even like toys, or children.

He asked John and Dot to visit. John said they kept their wedding day at home. “Bah! what's home?” cried Tackleton. “Four walls and a ceiling!” “Why don’t you kill that Cricket? I would! I always do.” He said he scrunched them with his heel.

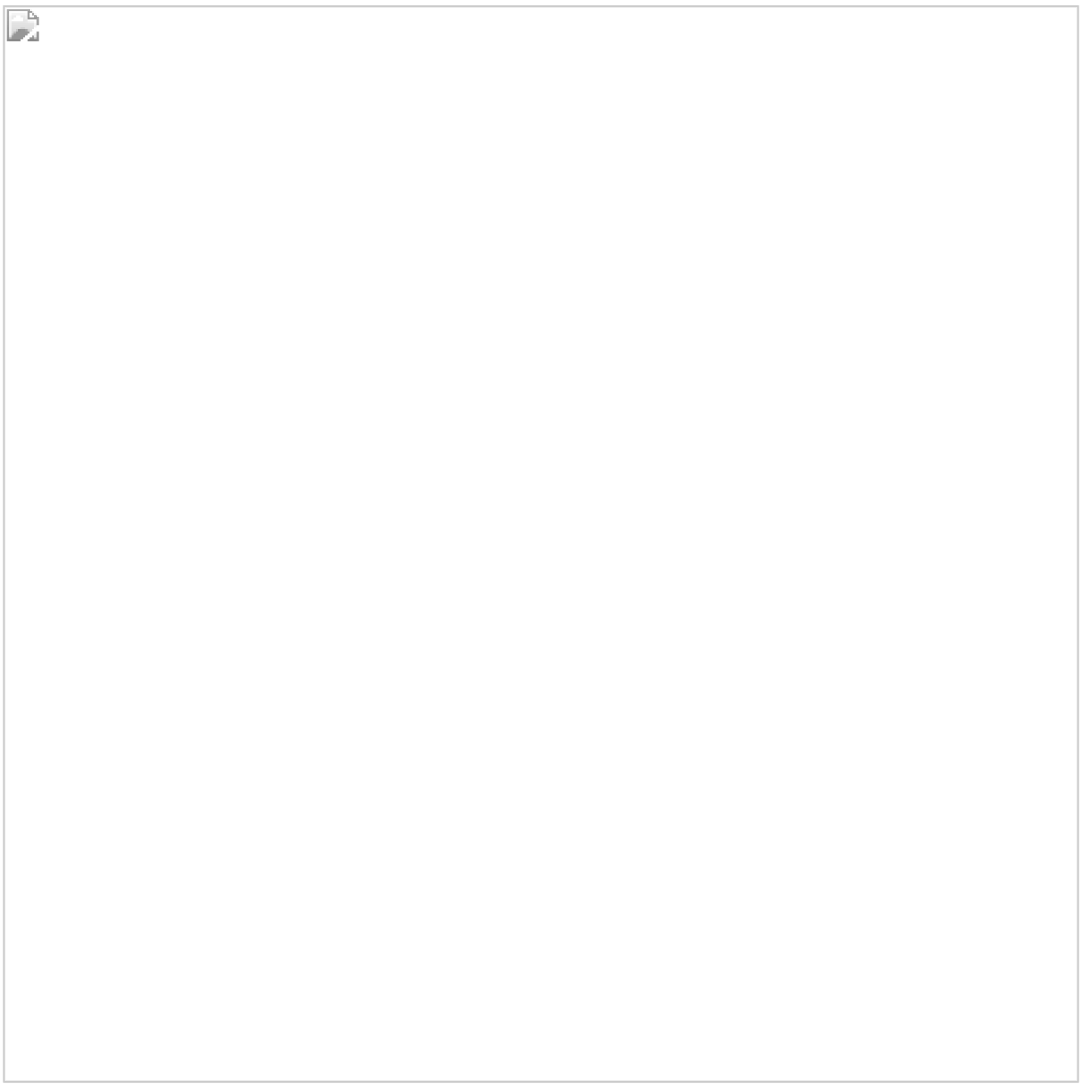
He also hinted that a young wife could not really love an older husband. The hint left John uneasy.

Just then Dot gave a loud, sudden cry. She laughed and she cried. Then she said it was nothing.

TALK ABOUT IT

Mr. Tackleton wanted John to feel worried. Why might someone try to make a friend worry?

Mr. Tackleton · another picture

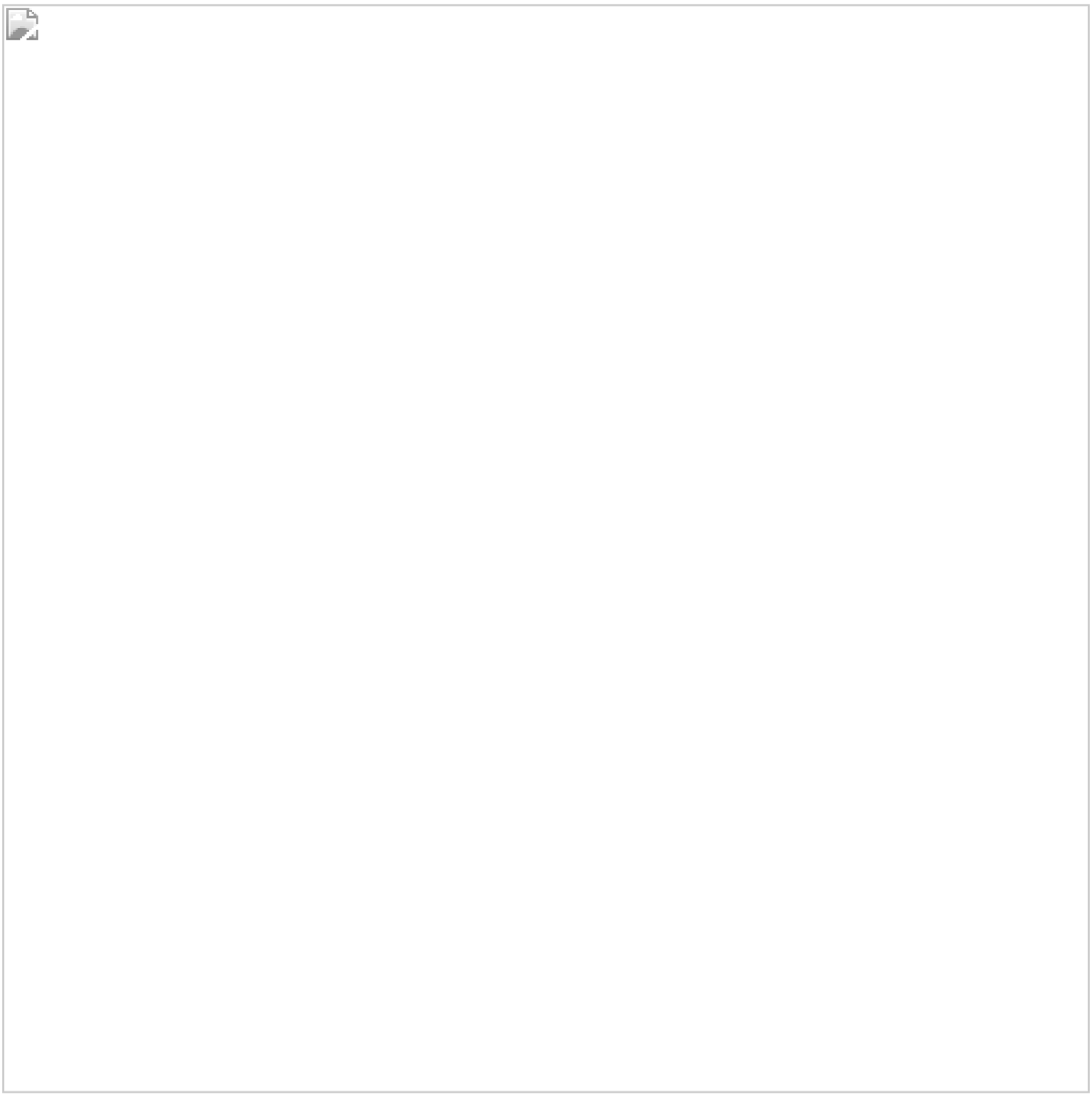


Think about it

1. What did Mr. Tackleton say about the Cricket?

- ○ He loved it
- ○ He said he scrunched them with his heel
- ○ He wanted one for a pet

A Bed for the Stranger



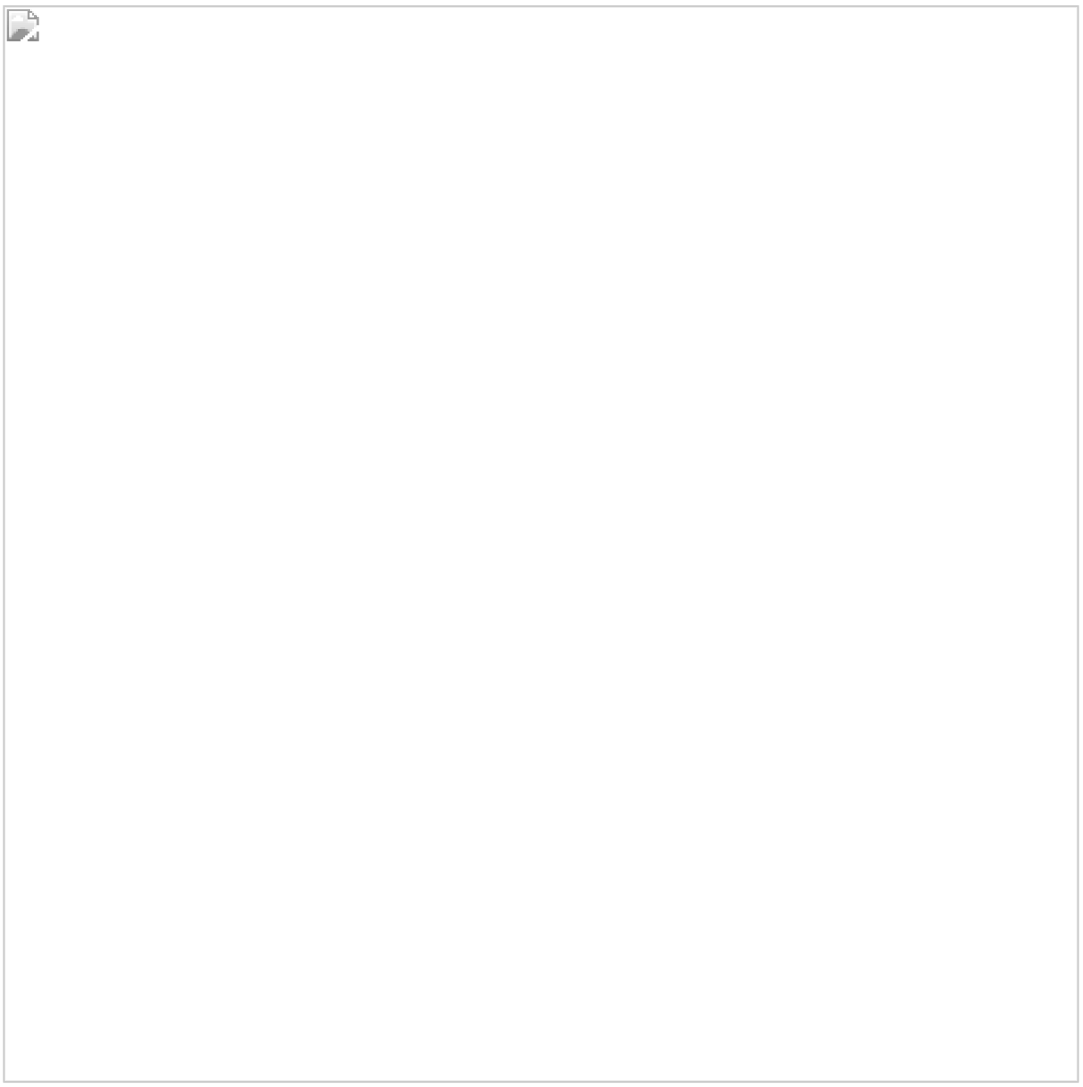
When Tackleton had gone, the old gentleman asked to rent a bed for the night. The helper he was waiting for had not come. “Yes, yes,” cried Dot. “Yes! Certainly!” John was surprised at how fast she said it.

Later John sat by the fire with his pipe, and Dot sat on her stool beside him. The Cricket chirped. It was a fairy spirit of Home, and it showed John pictures of Dot: as a laughing child, a bride, a mother, a grandmother. John's heart grew light.

But one picture was strange. A young man stood alone near Dot's stool. Why was his shadow on the hearth?

TALK ABOUT IT

John saw a shadow he did not understand. What would you want to do if you saw something that puzzled you?

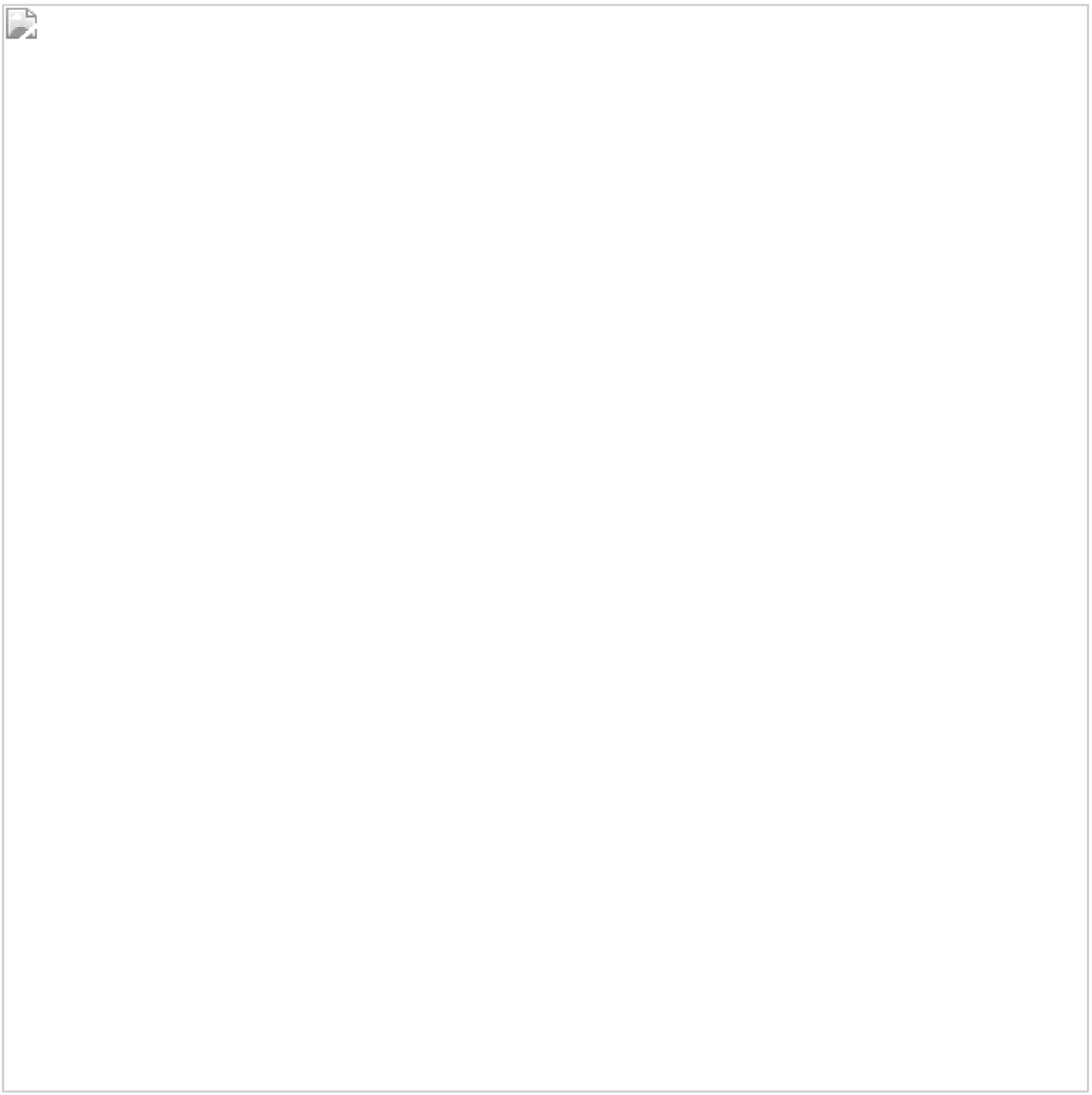


Think about it

1. What did Dot say when the old man asked for a bed?

- ○ Yes, certainly, right away
- ○ No, we have no room
- ○ Please ask Mr. Tackleton

Caleb's Make-Believe Home



Caleb and Bertha lived in “a little cracked nutshell of a wooden house.” But Bertha never knew. Caleb told her it was snug and bright and pretty.

She thought his old sack-cloth coat was a fine new bright-blue one. She thought Mr. Tackleton, their cold master, was a kind friend who secretly sent them presents. Dickens says Caleb knew “the magic of devoted, deathless love.”

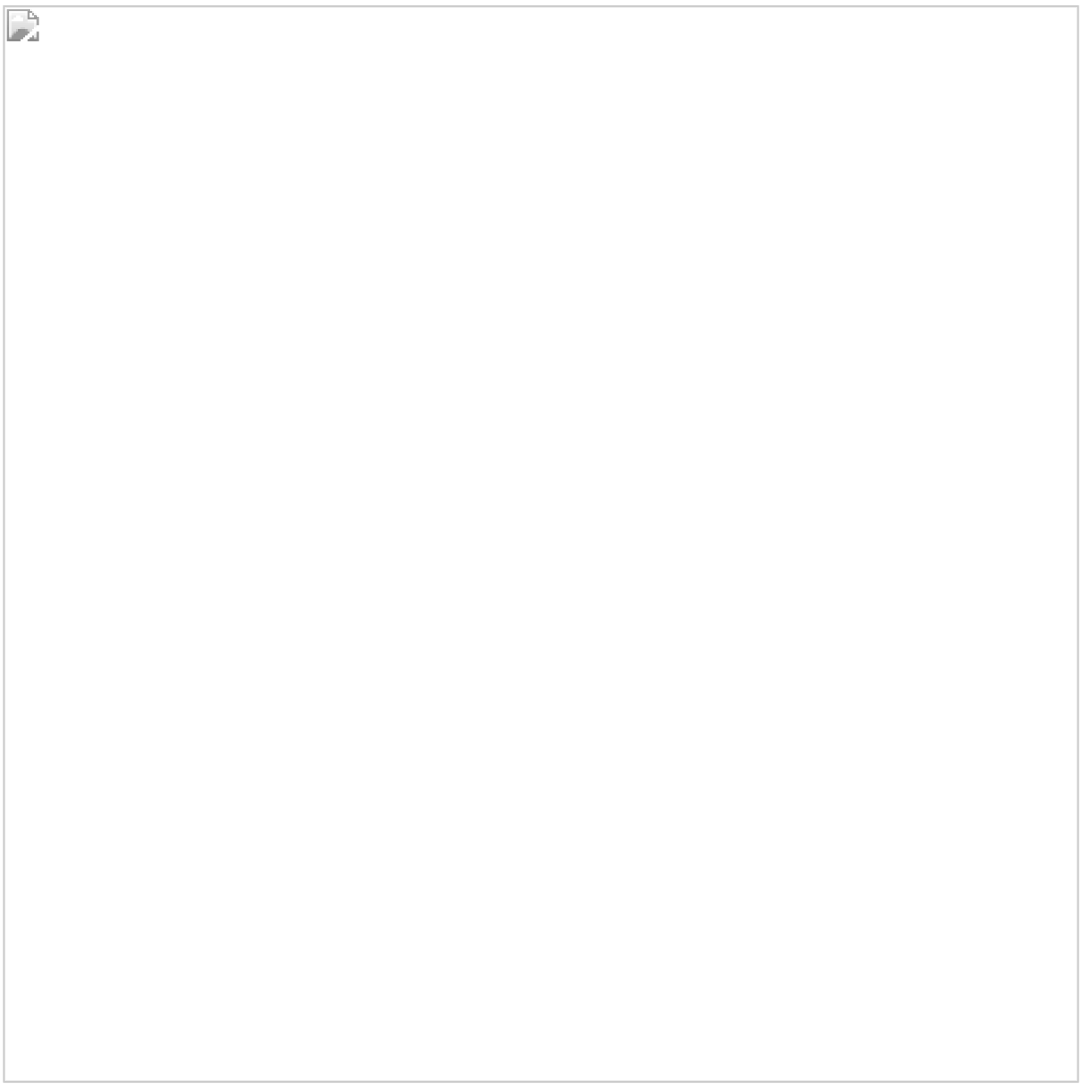
Then Tackleton told Bertha he was going to marry May. “Father, I am lonely in the dark. I want my eyes, my patient, willing eyes.”

“Here they are,” said Caleb. “Always ready.” He told her the room was lovely.

TALK ABOUT IT

Caleb made up a lovely home because he loved Bertha. What do you think might happen later?

Caleb's Make-Believe Home · another picture

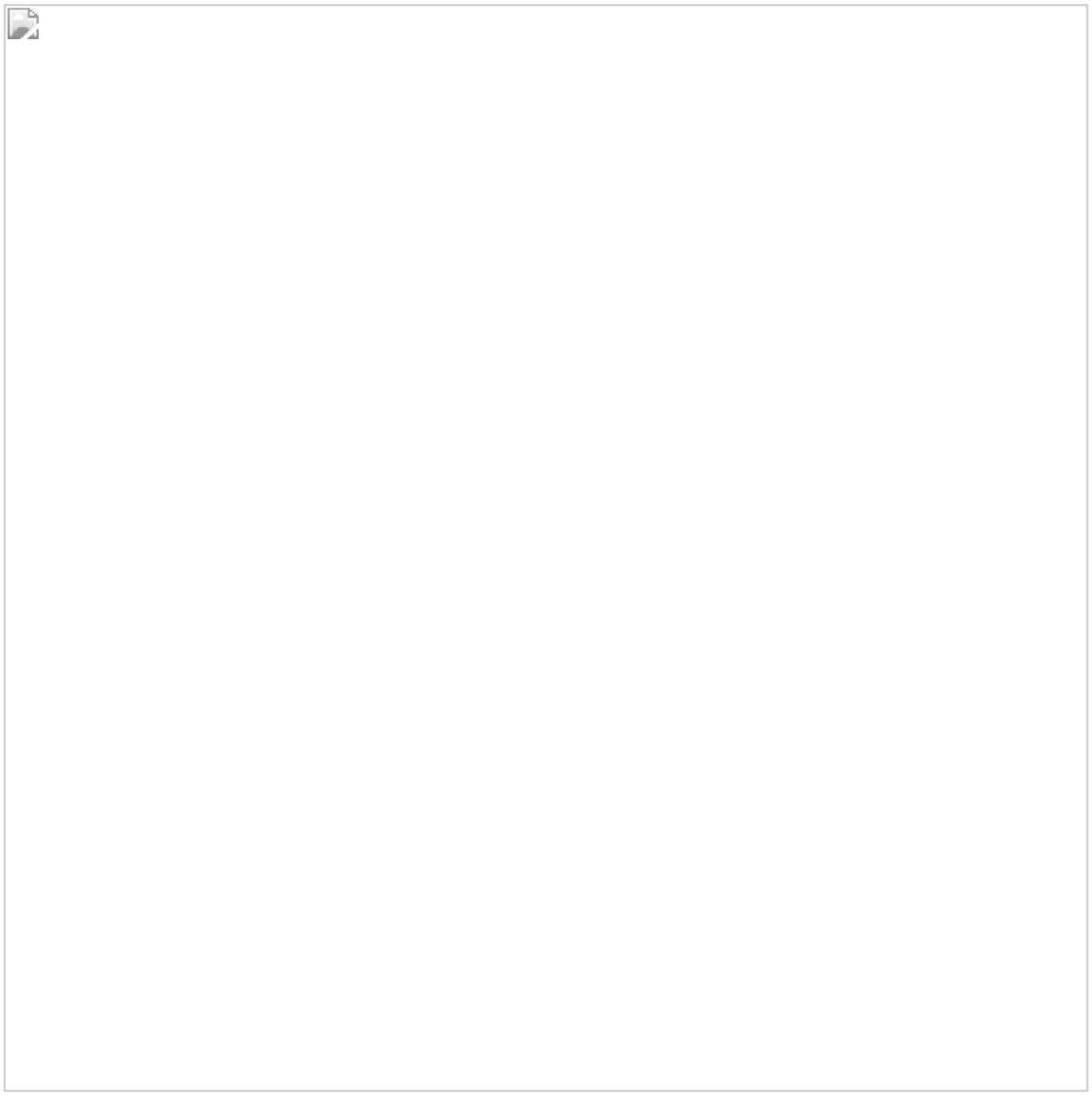


Think about it

1. What did Caleb tell Bertha his old coat was?

- ○ A fine new bright-blue coat
- ○ A red scarf
- ○ A raincoat

The Picnic



Every two weeks, Dot brought Caleb and Bertha a picnic. That day May was there with her mother, and Mr. Tackleton too. John drank a toast to Tackleton's wedding tomorrow, and went on with his deliveries.

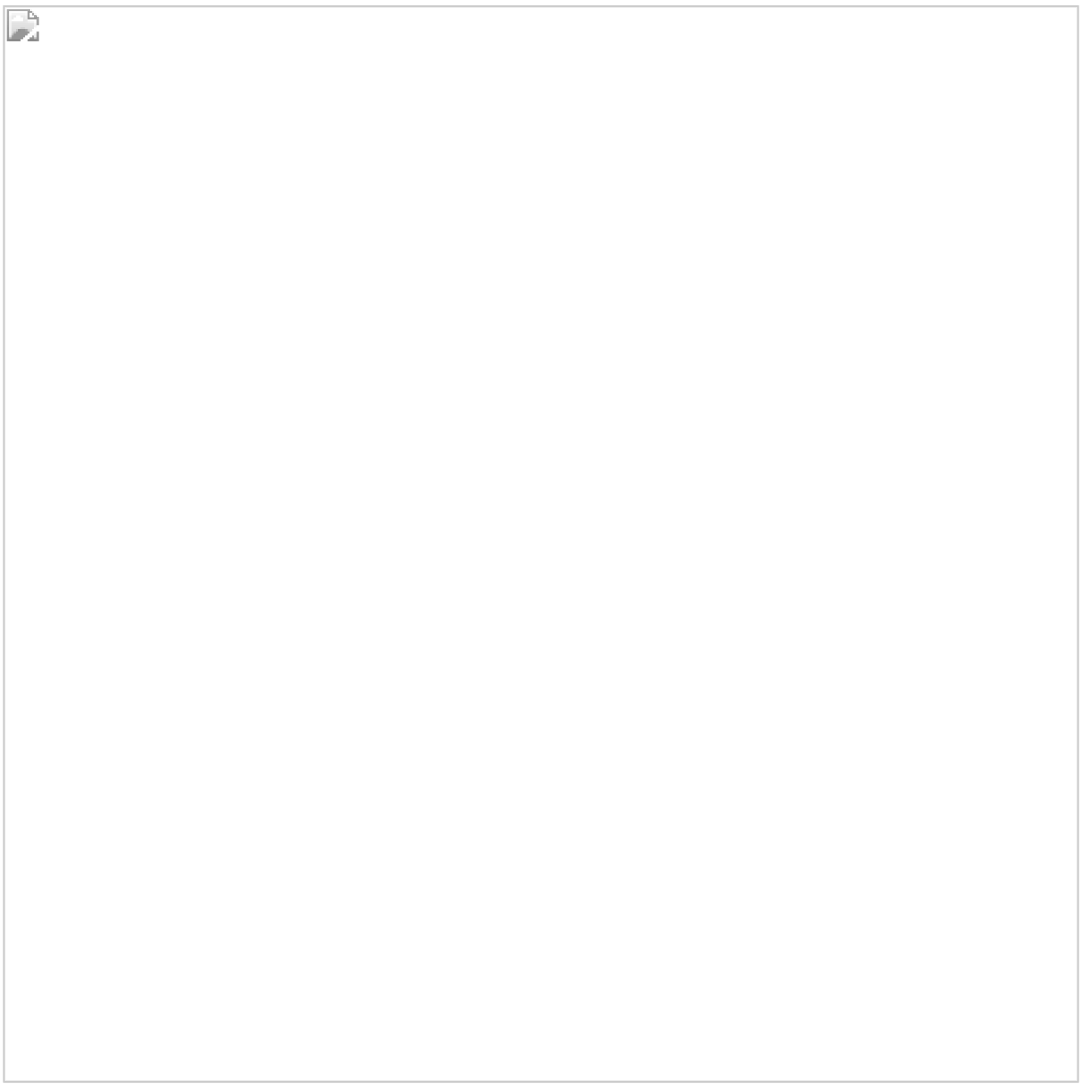
Then Bertha burst into tears. She asked May to come close. Bertha loved the kind man she thought Tackleton was, and her heart ached that May would marry him. Even so, she said, “Every blessing on your head!”

Caleb finally understood. “Have I deceived her from her cradle, but to break her heart at last!” he cried.

Dot hurried them away to comfort one another.

TALK ABOUT IT

Bertha wished May well even though her own heart hurt. What do you think that took?

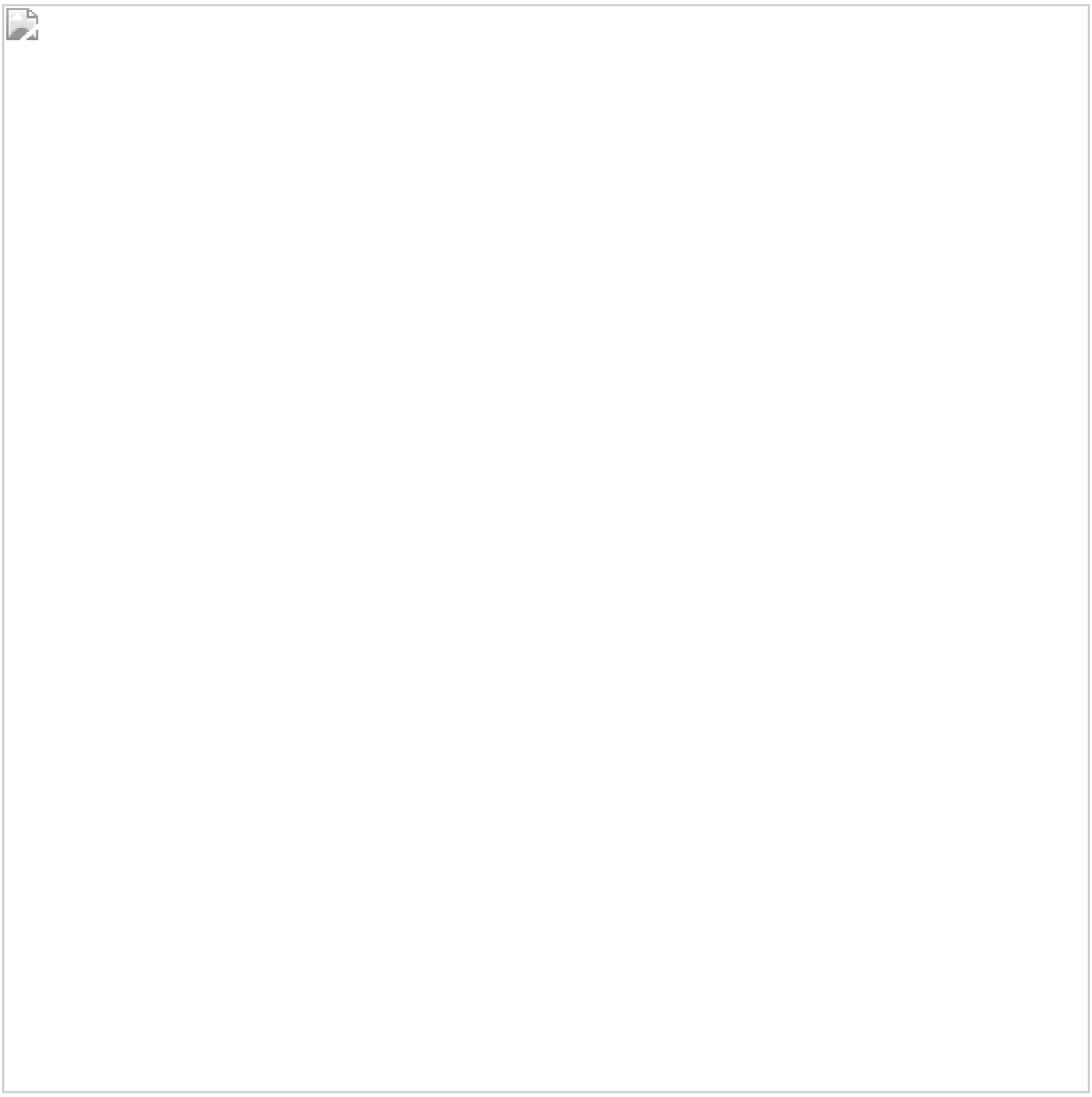


Think about it

1. What did Bertha say to May, even though she was sad?

- ○ Go away
- ○ Every blessing on your head
- ○ I want your cake

What John Saw



That evening John came back for Dot, with the old gentleman. John played cards with May's mother. Then Mr. Tackleton called him away and showed him a window into the long room next door.

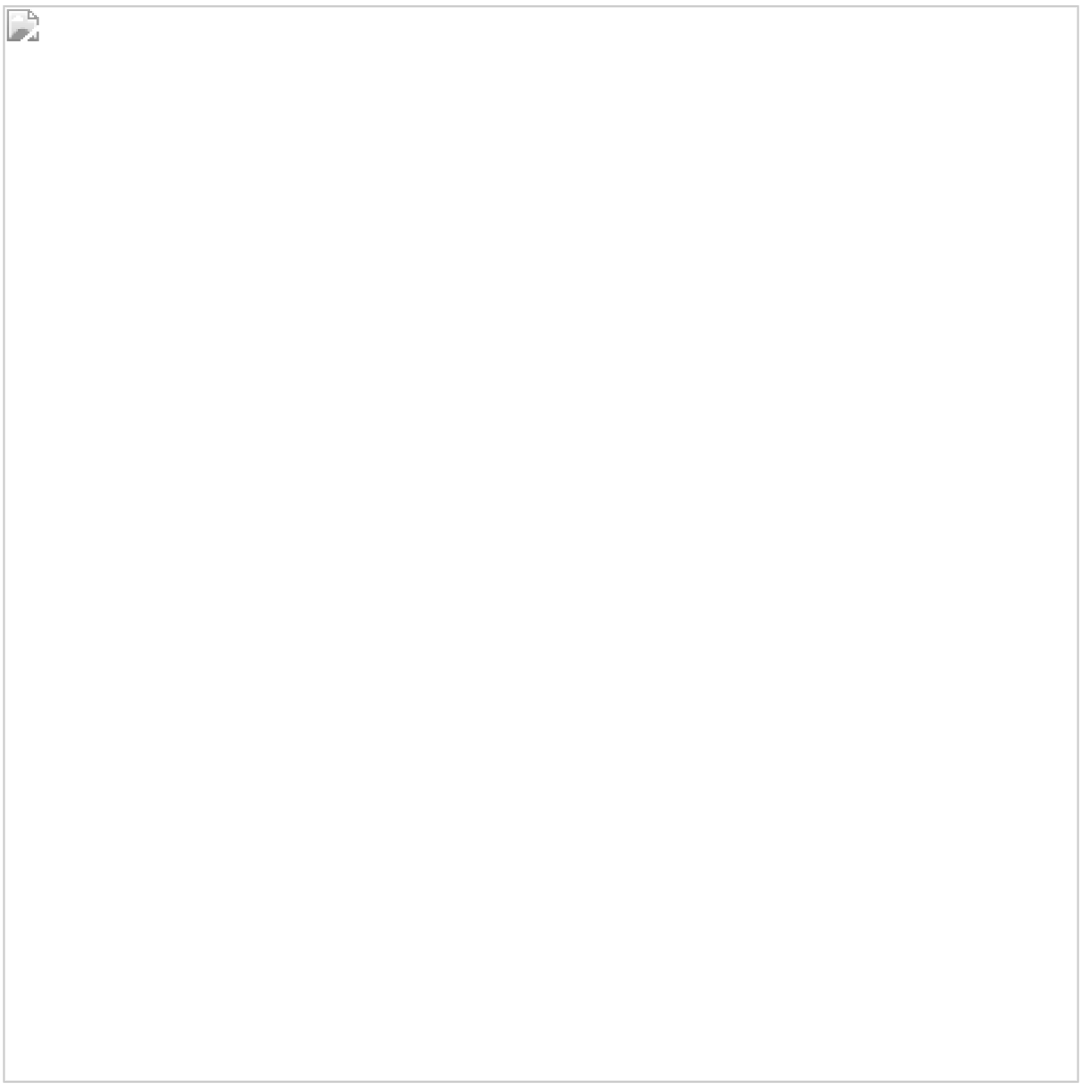
John saw Dot there with the old man. The old man took off his white hair, which was only a wig. He was not old at all, but young and tall. Dot, laughing, helped him put it back on.

John did not know what it meant. He thought Dot was keeping a terrible secret. His heart nearly broke. He said nothing, and walked beside the horse all the way home.

TALK ABOUT IT

John saw only one small piece of the story. What could he have done before deciding what it meant?

What John Saw · another picture

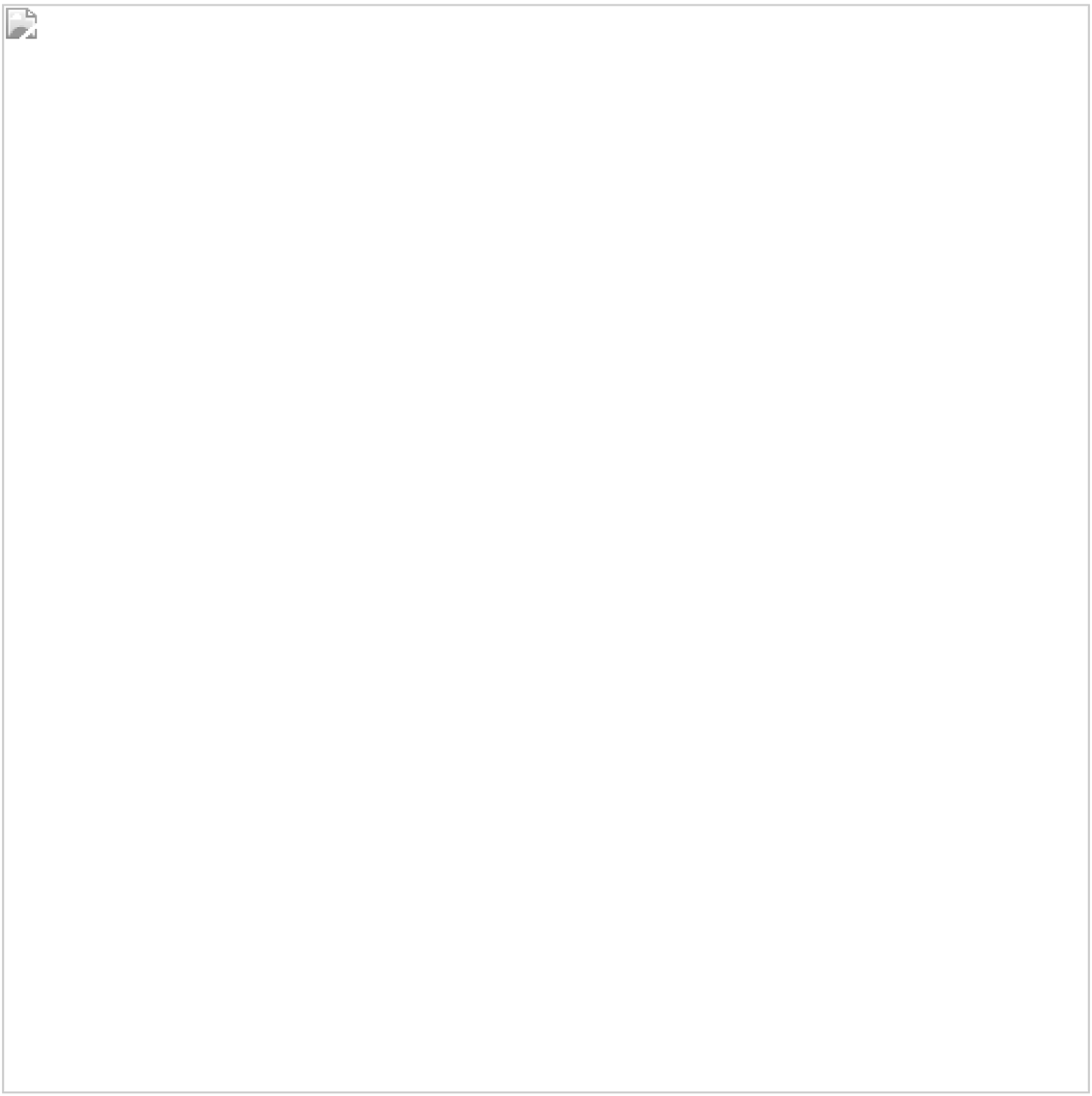


Think about it

1. What did John see through the window?

- ○ Dot dancing alone
- ○ Dot helping the old man put his white hair back on
- ○ Boxer chasing the cat

The Longest Night



John sat by the cold fireplace long after ten. Angry thoughts rose in him like a wind. He took the gun and went toward the stranger's door.

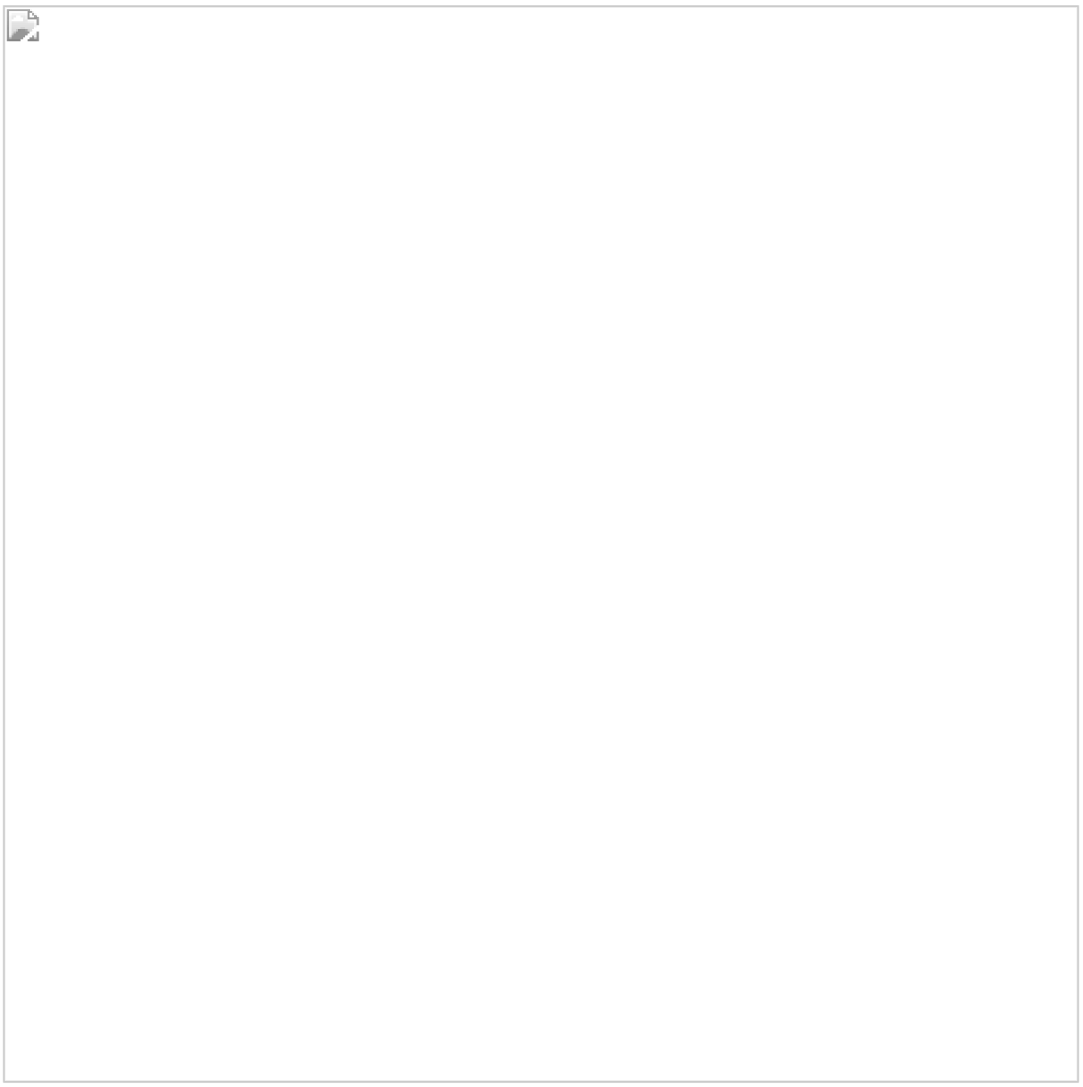
Suddenly the fire flared, and the Cricket began to chirp. It reminded him of Dot's gentle words. He put the gun away and wept.

The Cricket stood before him in fairy shape. “All things that speak the language of your hearth and home, must plead for her!” it said. “For they speak the truth.” Fairies showed him Dot as she really was: busy, kind and cheerful.

All night John listened. By sunrise, the anger was gone. Only his love remained.

TALK ABOUT IT

The Cricket's chirp reminded John of something Dot had said. What helps you stop and think when you feel very angry?

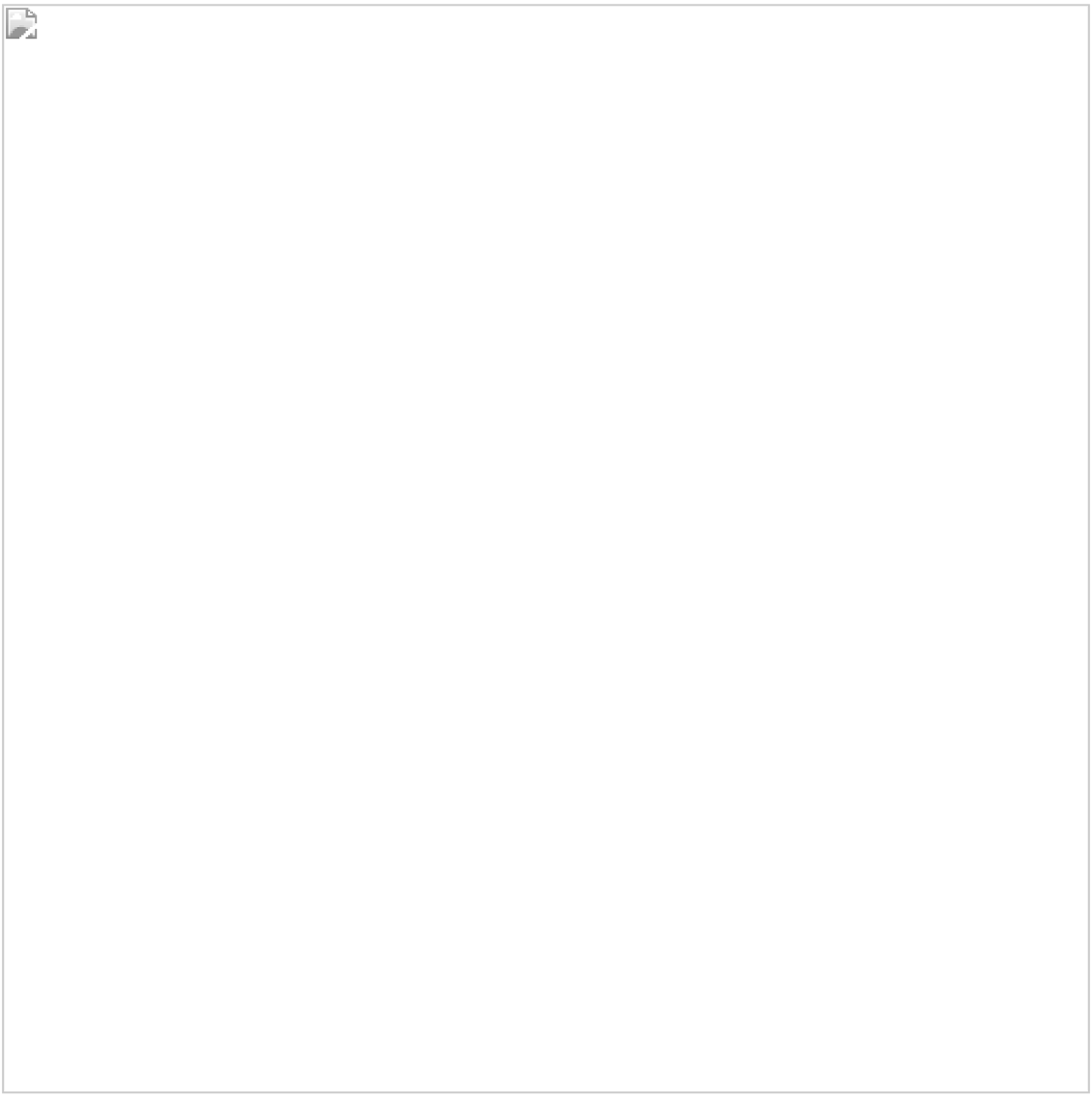


Think about it

1. What made John put the gun away?

- ○ The Cricket began to chirp
- ○ A knock at the door
- ○ The sun came up

John's Kind Heart



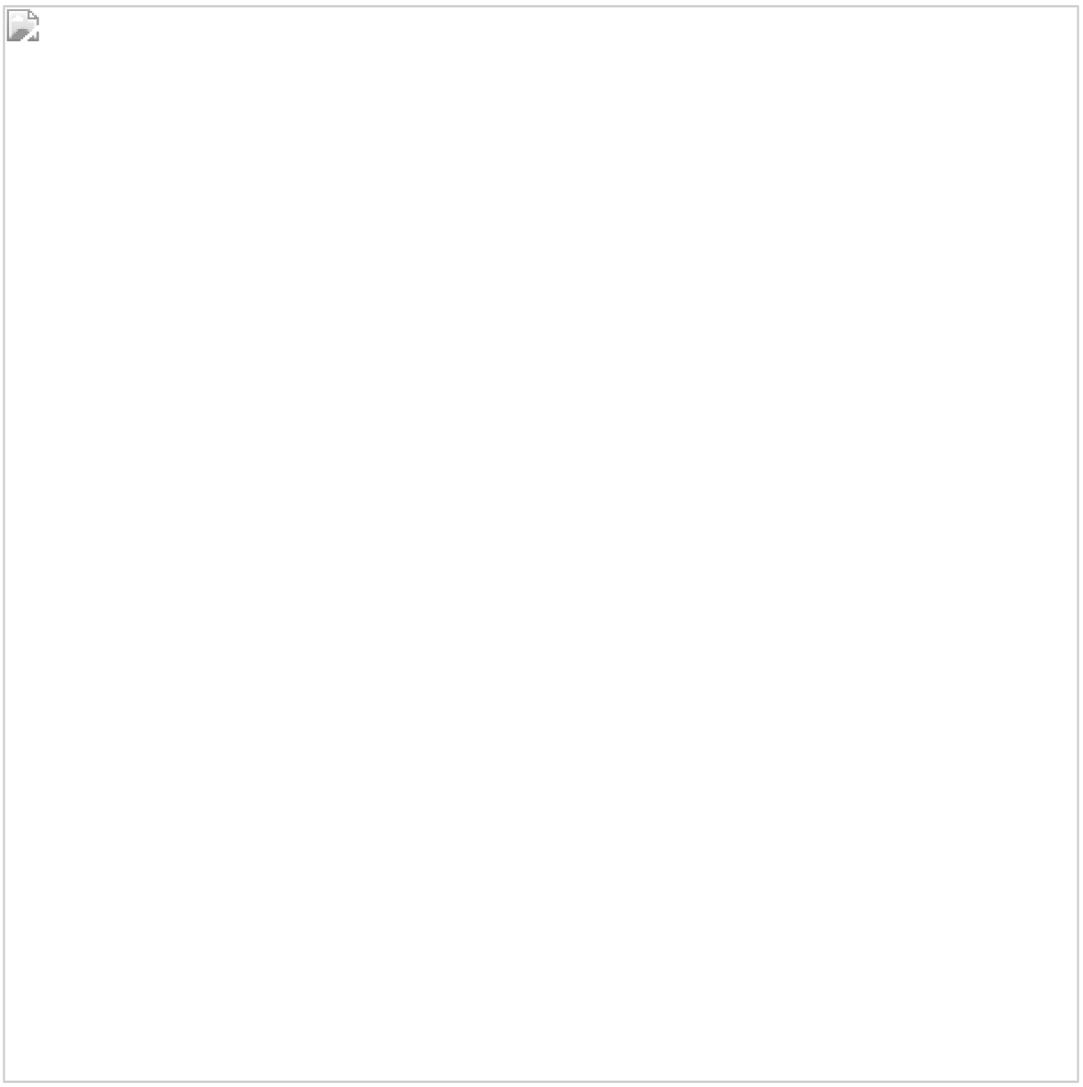
In the morning, Tackleton drove up for his wedding, with flowers on his horse's head. He hoped to hear John say angry things about Dot. The old gentleman's room was empty. He was gone.

John said he had thought it over all night. Dot was “my wife that I love,” he said. He could not believe she was guilty of anything worse than a secret. He felt too old and slow for her. He would let her go home to her parents, with his blessing and forgiveness.

Tackleton was astonished. Then Dot, who had been listening, said, “Do not say it's over yet!”

TALK ABOUT IT

John chose to be kind even though he was hurt. What do you think it took?

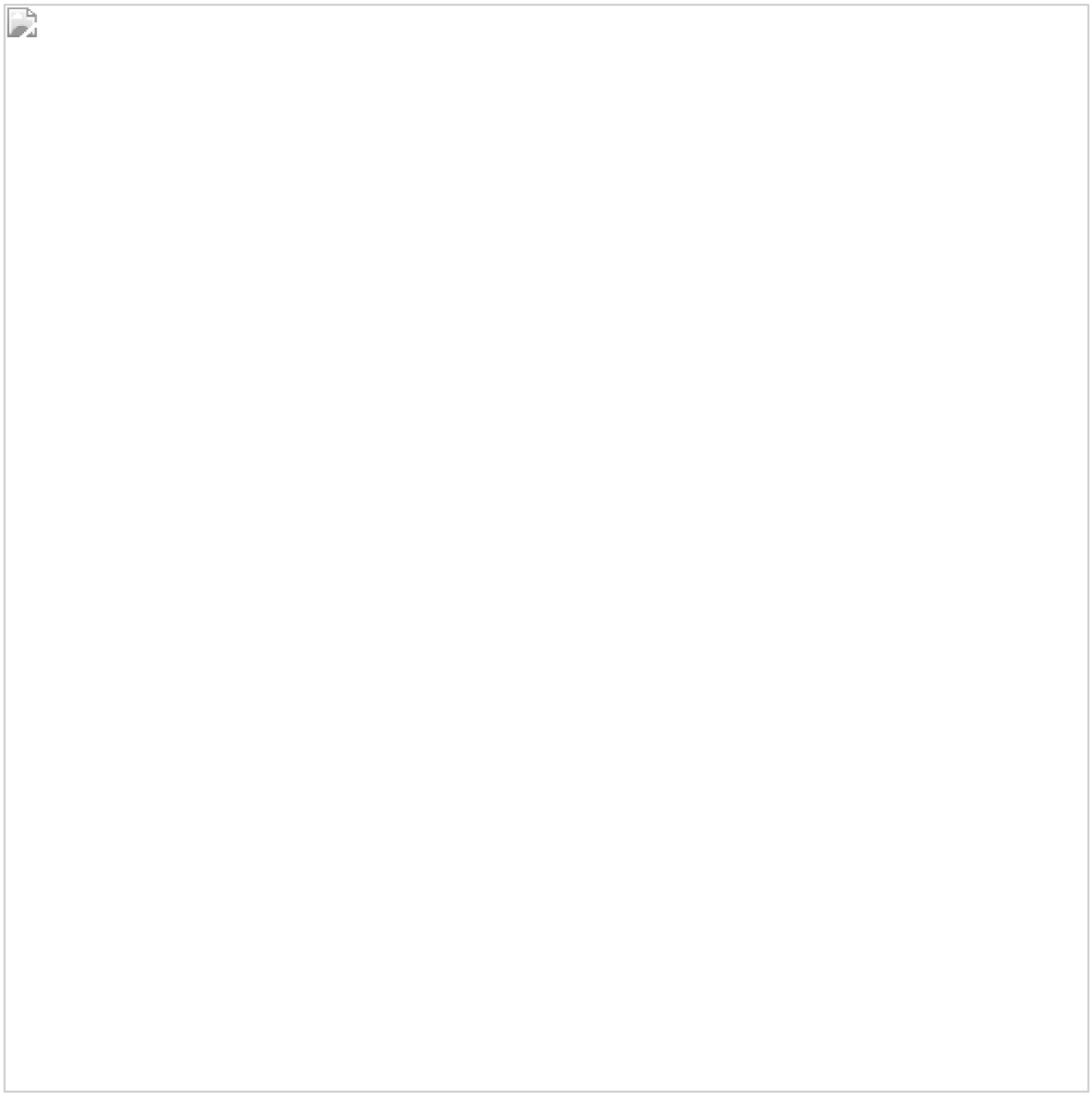


Think about it

1. What did John decide to do for Dot?

- ○ Be kind, forgive her, and let her go home
- ○ Shout at her
- ○ Move to the sea

Bertha Can See



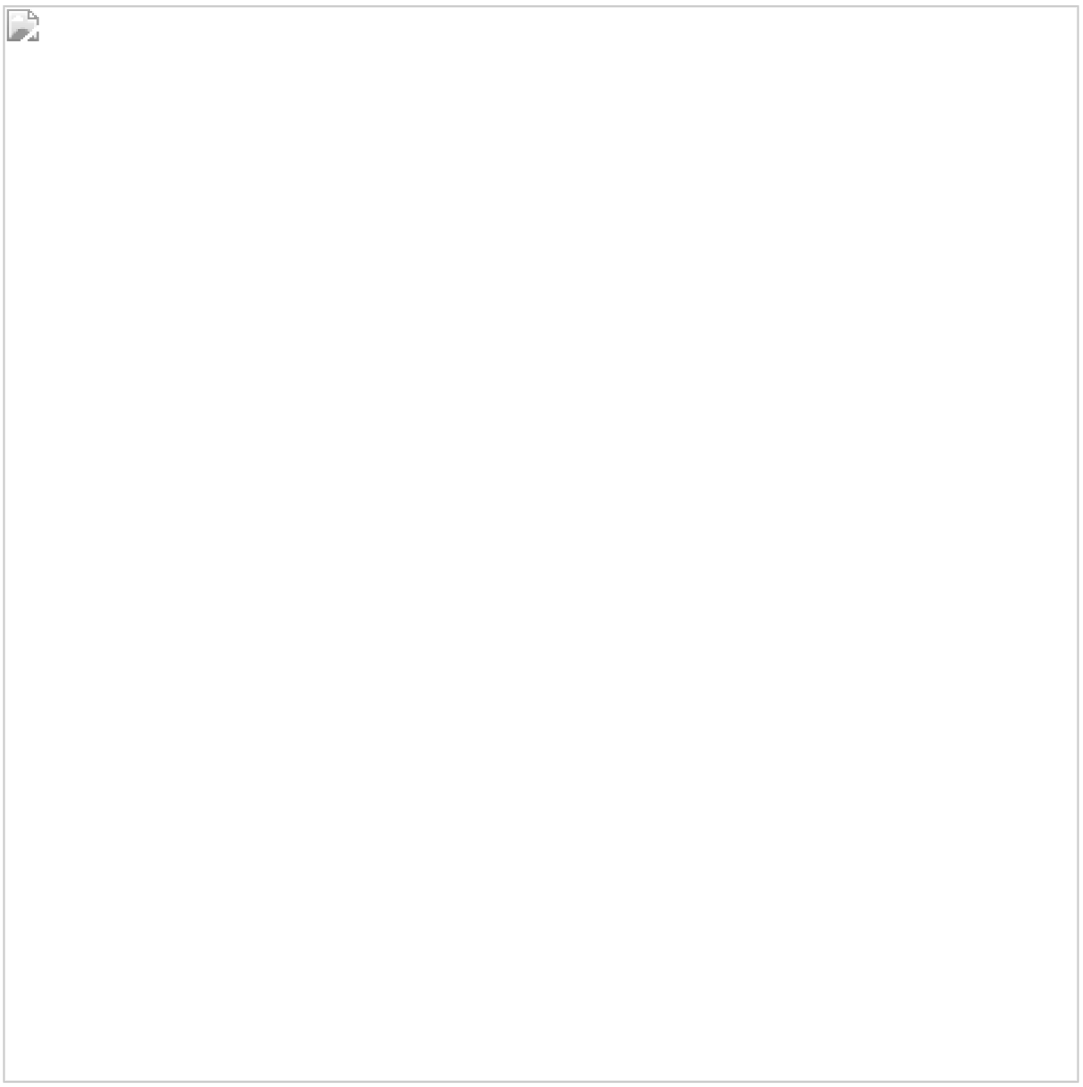
Meanwhile Caleb had brought Bertha to Dot's house, away from the wedding bells. He told her the truth: the crumbling house, the sack-cloth coat, the cold master. “I have wandered from the truth, intending to be kind to you; and have been cruel.”

Bertha asked Dot what her father looked like. Dot described an old man, tired from work and care. “I honour his grey head, and bless him!” Bertha said.

She held her father close. “It is my sight restored,” she said. “Nothing is gone. Dearest father, no! Everything is here—in you.”

TALK ABOUT IT

Bertha loved her father even more once she knew the truth. Why do you think she did?

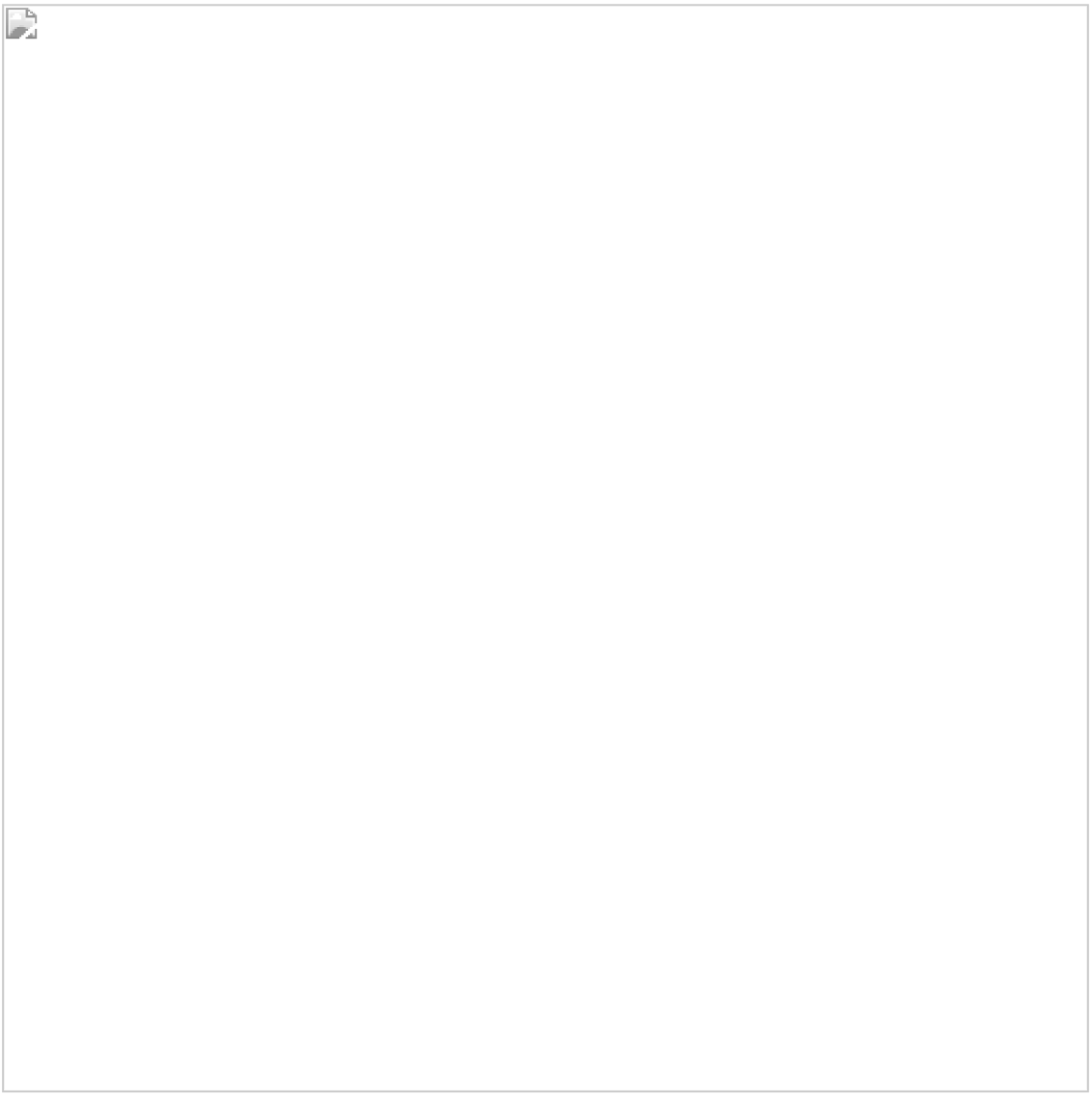


Think about it

1. How did Bertha feel about her father after she learned the truth?

- ○ She loved him even more
- ○ She never spoke to him again
- ○ She was angry for a year

He Is Alive!



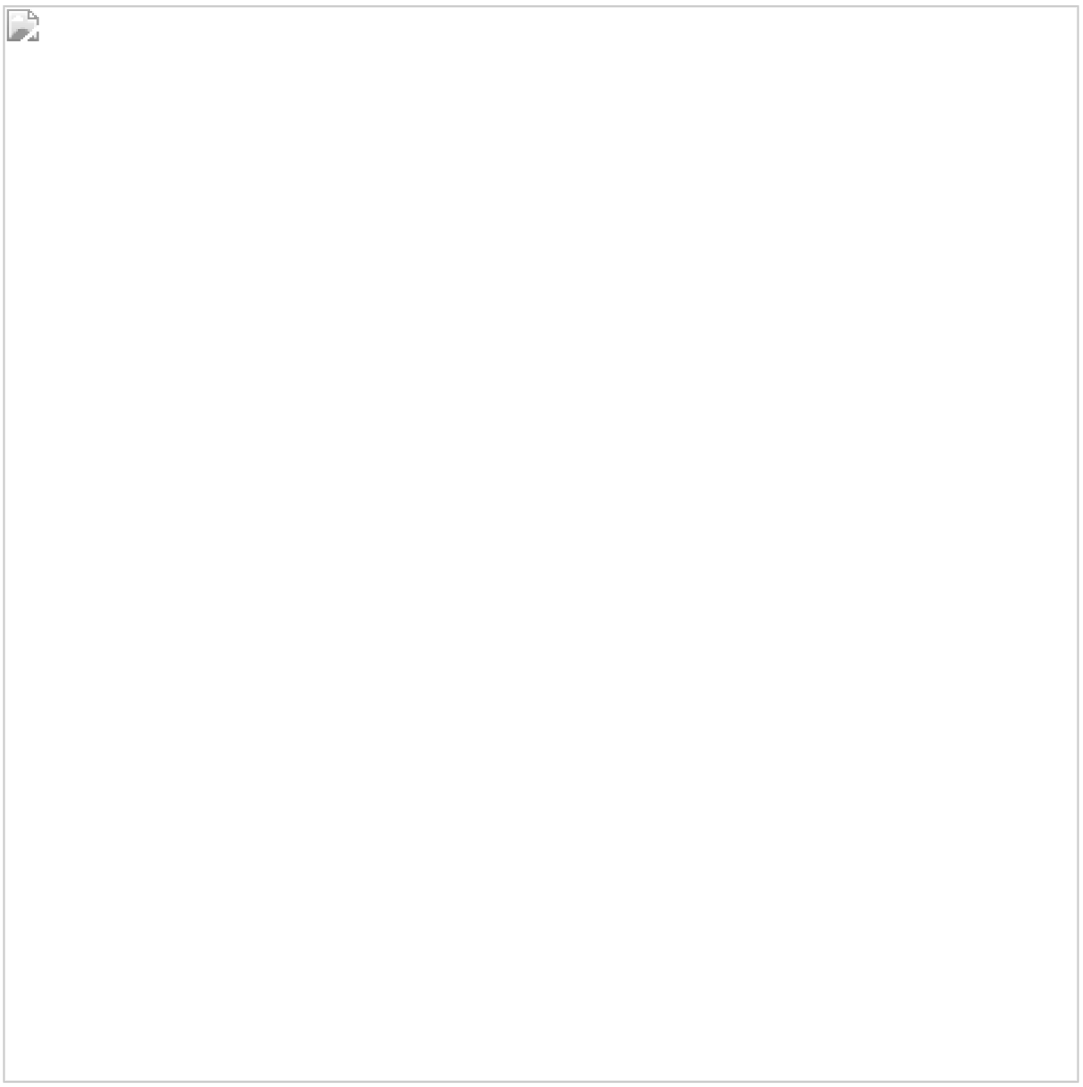
Dot heard wheels, and Bertha knew the step at the door: the same step as the night before. A young sailor rushed in, tossing his hat in the air.

Dot put her hands over Caleb's eyes. “He is alive!” she cried. “Your own dear son!” It was Caleb's boy Edward, whom everyone had thought dead. And he was the old gentleman!

“There was a generous friend of mine, once,” Edward told John, “who never would have judged me, or any other man, unheard.” He had come home in disguise to learn whether May still loved him. Dot had helped. May did. That very morning, they had been married.

TALK ABOUT IT

Edward said a good friend never judges anyone unheard. What does it mean to listen first?

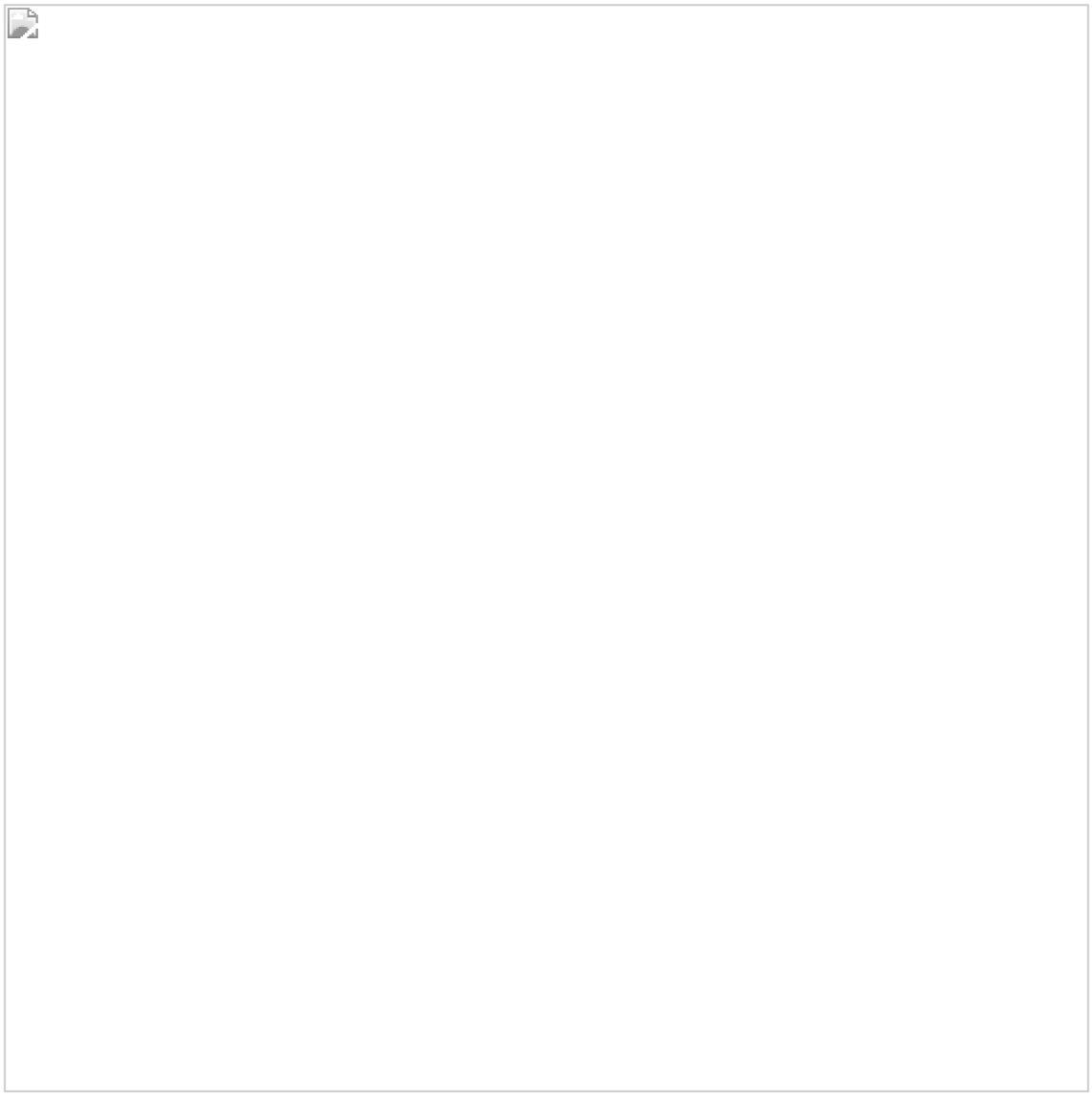


Think about it

1. Who was the old gentleman?

- ○ Mr. Tackleton's brother
- ○ Caleb's son Edward
- ○ A fairy

Take Me to Your Heart



Dot told John she was sorry. “It was wrong to have a secret from you, John.” She had only kept it, she said, because John was too open and honest to keep it for her. Then she ran to him. “Now, my dear husband, take me to your heart again! That's my home, John; and never, never think of sending me to any other!”

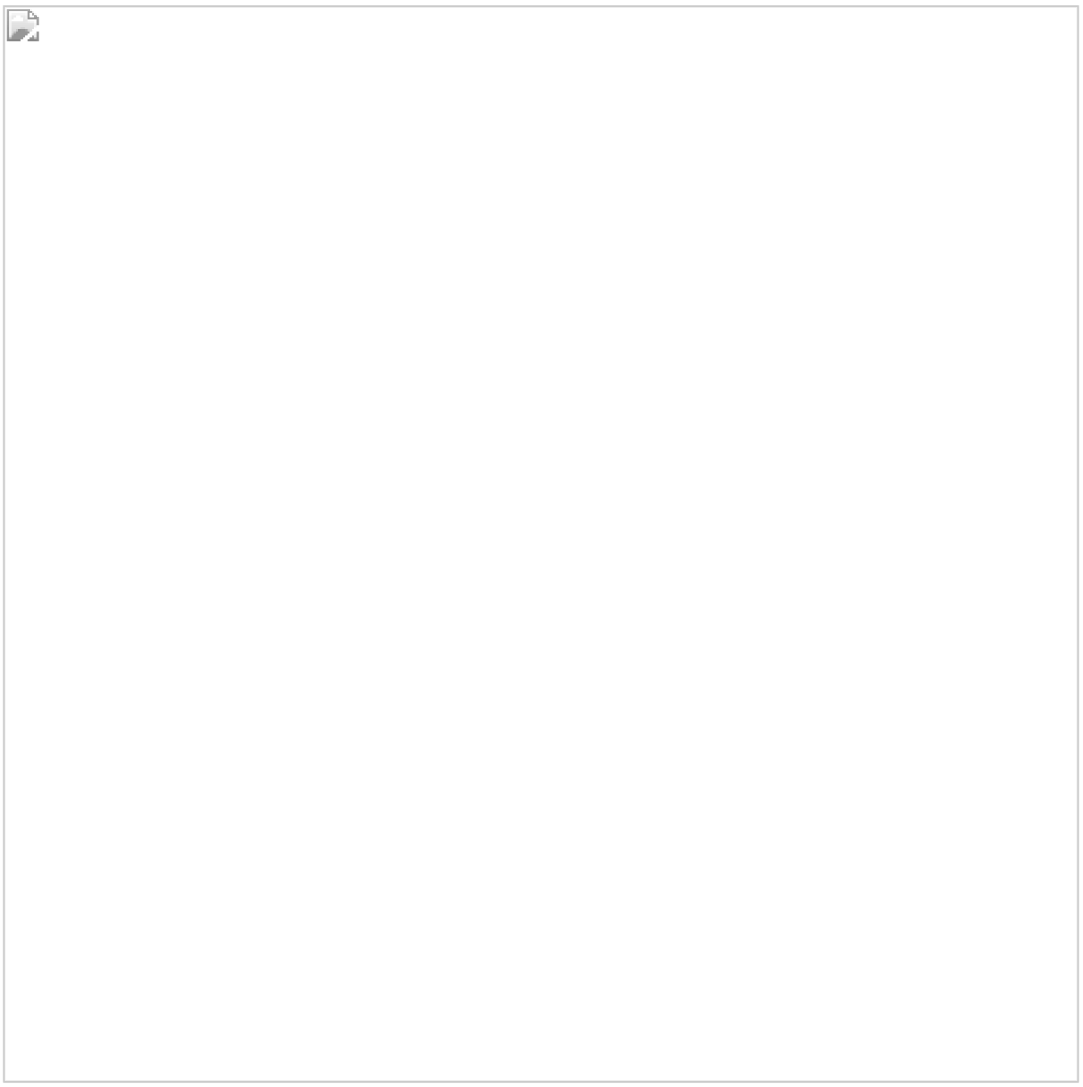
John was overjoyed.

Mr. Tackleton arrived, looking for his bride. May held out her hand, with a ring from Edward on it. Tackleton understood. He bowed and said, “I give you joy, sir!” Then he said he was sorry to Dot and John, and left.

TALK ABOUT IT

Dot said sorry for keeping a secret, and John forgave her. What do you think it feels like to be forgiven?

Take Me to Your Heart · another picture

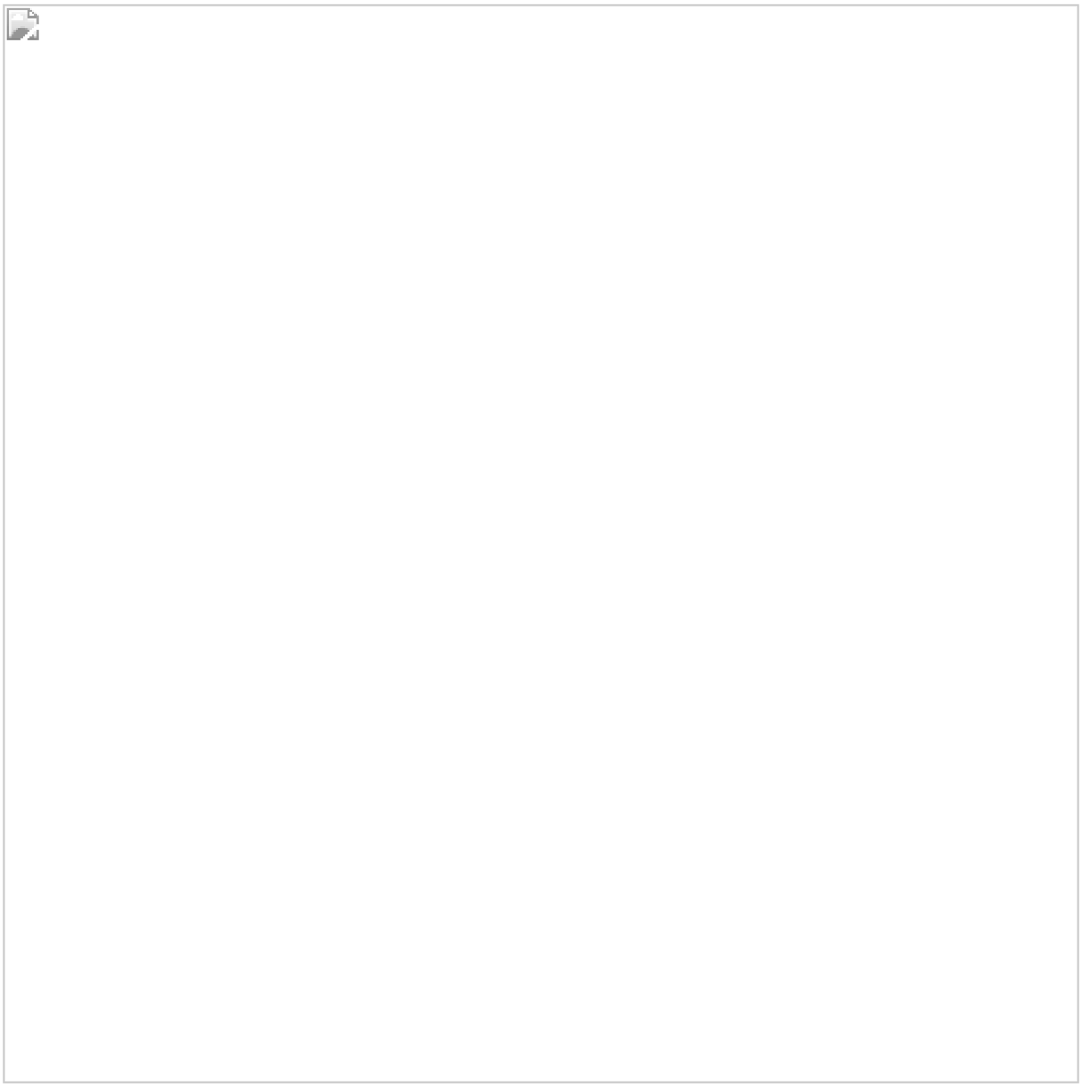


Think about it

1. What did Dot say was her home?

- ○ John's heart
- ○ The cart
- ○ The kettle

A Cricket Sings upon the Hearth



That day became a feast for everyone. Later a man brought Tackleton's wedding cake, and a few toys for the Babby.

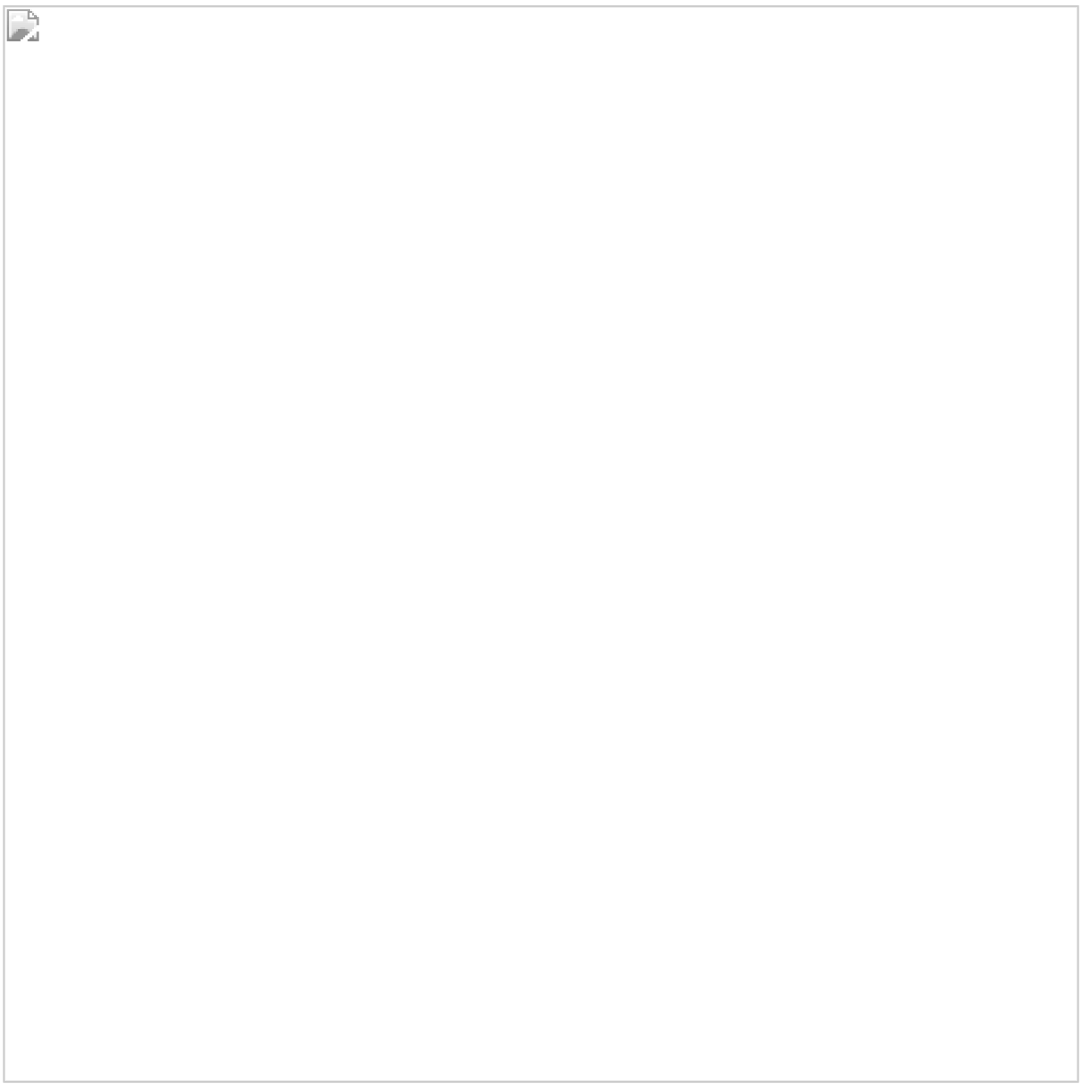
Then Tackleton came in, hat in hand. “I have not so much as a Cricket on my Hearth,” he said. “I have scared them all away.” He asked to join the party, and was soon laughing with the rest.

Bertha played her liveliest tune on the harp, and everyone danced. “Hark! how the Cricket joins the music with its Chirp, Chirp, Chirp; and how the kettle hums!”

Then the party faded away. “A Cricket sings upon the Hearth.”

TALK ABOUT IT

Mr. Tackleton changed when he saw how much love filled that house. What do you think made him change?



Think about it

1. What did Mr. Tackleton say he did not have?

- ○ A Cricket on his Hearth
- ○ A wedding cake
- ○ A horse

2. John, Dot, Caleb and Bertha all forgave. Who could you forgive, or say sorry to, this week?

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

— Yeshua HaMashiach

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